

In Between Days & Convergence

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Classification:MSR Title: In Between Days Title: Convergence Summary: Parts 2 and 3 in the Secrets and Gifts Trilogy. Action based stories that depict the end of the conspiracy. Disclaimer: The characters you recognize belong to Surf Daddy Carter.I am not making any profits from there use. Archive? Sure just let me know, and keep my name and addy attached. In Between Days The Diary of Dana Scully Mulder by The Liquid Sky Elliottca@nku.edu Mulder Residence April 3, Thursday 7:02 P.M. Dana sat down at her desk, and switched on her computer. It was time to add another entry to her diary. She took her glasses out, wiped the lenses with her shirt tails, and put them on. She could hear Mulder and Lily laughing in the next room, and Gryphon was putting the dinner dishes away. The screen shimmered in the dim light, and she switched on the desk top lamp. It was a hideous yellow, with a broad black base, and a pleated shade. Mulder wouldn't part with it. She smiled to herself, she'd gone back to calling him Mulder in the last few months, it just didn't feel right to call him Fox after all the years of trying not to call him that. Lily understood, and Mulder admitted that he preferred Scully to Dana. Dana typed in her password, Jellybean. Her nickname for their baby. She patted her stomach gently, and wondered about the baby inside of her. It had become quiet in the last few weeks, preparing itself for it's first journey. Her diary opened before her, and she began her latest passage. It has been a long time Ahab, and there is much to say. I cannot believe that it has already been nearly two years since Mulder and I married. You would be so proud of me. He's a wonderful man, but I've told you that many times before. What I want to tell you is how afraid I am. I am worried that something will be wrong with the baby. Mulder and Dr. French try to reassure me, and logically, I know that all is fine, but there's something there, nagging in the darkness. The what if? Lily comes to us with a new name everyday, but I can't help feeling like I will jinx myself if I get too excited. I haven't had any problems with the pregnancy, but I

can't get past the fear. Mulder sensed that I was worried so we had an amniocentesis done. So far, so good. That, and the DNA report that we got before we implanted the eggs should have been enough, enough to convince me to decorate his room. But still I wait. We think it's a boy by the way. I can't wait to meet my little Fox. That is the only way that I can picture our child. Brown hair, hazel eyes. Dad, my only wish for this child is that I will raise him to be honest, strong, and caring, like his grandfather. That is not entirely true, I also wish that you could be here to hold him. And me. I miss you Dad, every day. Love, Starbuck. Dana saved the entry to her diary diskette, and moved to close the file. Her eye was drawn to the date of her first entry, July 12th. Almost two years ago. She opened the file, and reread her thoughts, it was the day she married Mulder. Monday July 12th Melissa, I hope that I did the right thing. Mulder needed my help, and I just didn't see any other way. I kept waiting for Bill to show up, and cause a scene. Mom was upset, but she came anyway. I know that she would rather that we had a church wedding, but it wasn't appropriate, and I'm not sure I could convince Mulder to set aside his beliefs to please Mom. Father Roberts from St. Timothy's called me, and asked how I felt about Mulder being Jewish, I told him that I had no problem with Lily being raised as Mulder saw fit. I heard him winding up for a sermon, so I made an excuse, and got off the phone. I'll confess that when we get back from Richmond. We're going to pick up Lily in two days. That will be the true test of whether Mulder and I made the right decision. She is already so fragile right now, the last thing either of us wants is to cause her anymore harm. We took off from work for the next three weeks to find a house, and get settled. It's not much time, but Mulder works wonders when there's a deadline. I wish that things were different. I wish that I could tell him how I feel about him. If only he knew that I was screaming I love you in my head during the ceremony. He gave me a peck on the lips, and nothing more. Skinner congratulated us with handshakes, and the county clerk handed us our signed and stamped license. It was so cold and professional that we could have been lecturing on the effects of dust on the moon. Not that I was bored, I just pictured something more. I guess the unbridled romantic in me was hoping that Mulder would profess his undying love. He gave me a giant diamond, though I'm not sure that I can put rubber gloves on over it. He took me to lunch, and *paid* for it. It was his treat he said, for being Mrs. Mulder. I wonder how long I can coast by on that one. So, here I am, honeymoon night. He's with Byers, and I'm missing you. I am so curious to see how things will turn out for us. We have a treacherous road ahead. I love you Sissy, Dana. Dana smiled as she closed the file, those first few days had been so awkward. Neither of them knew how to approach the other, and neither of them was willing to discuss the boundaries of their relationship. It was finally she that laid the ground rules about who would sleep where, and what they would do about being out together in public. Another contraction gripped her, and she squeezed her eyes against the pain. The contractions were coming more frequently these days, and the last two days, she'd had false labor twice. Mulder was on pins and needles, and guarding her like a hawk. Maybe I should tell him, she thought. No, I'll give it another hour, and if they become regular, I'll get him. She turned her attention back to her diary, and pulled up the next entry. Wednesday August 28th Melissa, We closed on the house two days ago, and we're moving in on Friday. It's a gorgeous Victorian. Light tan with sage and beige trim. I know that it was extravagant- it has 5 bedrooms, and it's a three story, but Mulder wanted a big house. I asked him what we would do with all of those bedrooms, and do you know that he said that we would fill them. He's so vague. I

don't dare dream that he could mean with children. Besides, he knows I can't have any. Monday after we picked up the keys, we dropped off gallons and gallons of paint. We had lofty ideas about painting Lily's room, and decorating it before we moved her things in, but Mulder wanted fairy borders, and gnomes, and butterflies, I told him that my painting skills were limited, yet he had nothing but praise for my handiwork. I put the guys' faces on my gnomes. I wonder if Mulder will ever tell Frohike that I see him as a troll. We finished painting her bedroom today, and we started on his bedroom. He chose a warm caramel color for his walls, and butter cream for the trim. It looks very nice. I never pictured Mulder as having taste, especially after being subjected to his ties for the last few years, but he chose furnishings that I thought were quite nice. His bed is huge. I can only imagine the kinds of fantasies that he is trying to live out by having a king sized- four poster bed. He bought a step ladder for it- So that I could visit him- he said. It stands above my waist, and I wish that he would throw me on that bed and ravage me. He picked up an armoire that he'd had in storage for all these years, and gave it to me. I couldn't believe it, it's absolutely gorgeous. It will look very nice next to my window. My window looks out onto a gazebo in the backyard, and I'm planting roses next year. Hopefully the scent of roses will waft throughout the house all summer long. I am so happy, Sissy. This place is incredible, and I can't wait to begin my new life with Mulder, and Lily. My daughter. I'm still trying to get used to the idea that I have a daughter now. She reminds me of you, and Emily so much. When she smiles, and when she's sleeping. Her face smooths out, and she is without worries. During the day, I know that it is hard for her. She misses her mother desperately. I know that pain. I've held her the last few evenings, and let her sleep on my lap. She is very clingy with Mulder, and won't let him out of her sight for longer than five minutes, unless I'm there. I think that it's wonderful that she needs us so much, but I wish that the reason that she needed us was less ominous. I would give anything to take the pain out of her heart. I love her. I don't know if I love Lily because of Mulder, because of Emily, or because she's just an all around great kid, but I love her. And I will do anything to make her life better. I recently told Mulder that I believe that you are taking care of Emily for me. You, and Dad. And I hope that I am right. I hope that you hug her, and kiss her every day. Do you have days in Heaven? Or is it an endless expanse of light, and love? That is what I choose to believe. That you are sunlight warming my face, and wind, stirring my hair when I'm sitting under our tree. Please take care of yourself. I love you, Dana. Dana wiped her eyes as she reread her diary. Melissa was on her mind a lot lately. The baby stirred, and she felt the beginnings of another contraction. So far, they were pretty erratic, and she didn't want to worry Mulder with another false alarm. She continued reading. Sunday September 1st Dear Melissa, Just wanted to drop a few lines before I went to bed. We go back to work tomorrow morning, and we've gotten most of the work done. I told you Mulder is phenomenal with deadlines. I still need to bring my things over from the apartment, a few lamps, and Gramm's blankets, my kitchenware. Not surprisingly, Mulder didn't have any cookware, so we've been eating at Mom's for the last few nights. Lily has really taken to Mom and vice-versa. They spent the day making sugar cookies, and Mom is making Lily, and Mulder squares for the family quilt. Mulder insisted on keeping his sofa, but I asked him to keep it in the basement. He's set up a screening room with a big screen t.v. and a stereo system. The man is addicted to those tapes. Mom gave us a check a few days after we got married. It was from dad. He had set aside money for each of us to use for our first home. We

would never have been able to afford this house if he hadn't. Well, the check, along with Mulder's savings. I bought him the big screen t.v. as a wedding present. I felt so bad that he had given me his grandmother's armoire. Did I tell you that his grandfather Abraham built it for his wife Sasha as a wedding present? It has their names, William's and Tina's, carved into a panel on the back. I didn't want to accept it, but he insisted. He is so romantic, without being romantic. Do you understand? He can do something so sweet, and blow it off as meaningless. (Like that damned key chain). I made such a fool of myself. "No, I just thought it was a really cool key chain." I could have died. I really do have to be going. It's nearly 11, and I have no idea what I am wearing tomorrow. My first day back as a new mom. I'm thinking that I should go by Scully at work just to reduce the confusion. Imagine that, confusion surrounding Mulder. Love D. Monday September 2 Melissa, That arrogant S.O.B. had the nerve to have my name changed in the directory at work. Everywhere I went today, "Hello Mrs. Agent Mulder." As if I'm just an extension of him. I am my own person damn it. I did not bust my ass at Quantico to be half an Agent. I could kill him. Except he's so cute. And he was really sorry when I told him that I wasn't thrilled about his surprise. He said that he didn't mean any harm, and I know that he didn't. He just needs to understand what it's like being thought of as weak, and incapable. I can hold my own. And I have proven that time and again. That's what Jack never understood. He was truly a sexist pig if I ever met one. Mulder. He's just being sweet. Oh God, Melissa, I've just pleaded his case for him, and he wasn't even here. I am so in love with him, what am I going to do? He asked if he could brush my hair every night. He thinks it would be a very relaxing way to end the day. Relaxing? I don't know that I will be able to relax with my head in his lap. I will write more tomorrow. Love, Love, and more Love D. Tuesday September 3 Sissy, Today, Mulder and I had a discussion about Krycek, which inevitably lead to discussing your death. We've talked about it before, but today was different. I've felt so hollow these last few years, and I knew that some deep introspection was coming. Now that it is here, I have to say that I wasn't expecting the grief to still be so overwhelming. I didn't say anything to Mulder, I just went to the restroom, and sobbed. I wadded tissue into my palms, and I cried and cried. I didn't want anyone to hear, isn't that horrible? People think that it just goes away after your three day's are over. But it just hangs there. No one ever speaks about it, but every time they look at me they think, oh that poor dear, to have lost her sister, and her daughter to Spooky Mulder's quest. I walk in to half finished conversations a lot, and I hold my chin up higher, but days like today, I don't know. Something slips by- it starts to crack, and before I can control it, I am in the restroom, begging God to tell me why he did this to me. Afterwards, I can usually put it all back together. Mulder never questions. He never looks up, he affords me the privacy that only he understands. Today, however, I couldn't piece it together. No matter how hard I tried. I stood up, took a deep breath, and felt myself folding again. I knew that I had to get back before Mulder began to worry. I'd been gone for 20 minutes already. I just couldn't. My soul was so weary, that I just lay on the floor, waiting for it to open up and swallow me into it's blackness. I felt the cool hard tile pressing into my cheek, and I screamed inside. I screamed with all of my might. I saw my fist pounding the floor, but I felt disconnected, disjointed. I don't know if Mulder just knew, or if he heard me screaming. I can't remember if I screamed out loud or not. But the next thing I remember is Mulder scooping me up off of the floor, and wiping my face with his hands. I tried to speak, and he just kept

shushing me, smoothing my hair. He never said a word, and he didn't tell me not to cry. He never looked embarrassed, or horrified, he just held me tighter than I've ever been held. I felt so tiny in his arms. And for a while, it felt good to just let someone else be strong. It felt right to let go, and give in to my grief. I could feel my bottom lip quivering, and I tensed up. But he didn't let go. I love him for that. He led me out to the car, strapped me in, and drove me home. He carried me up to my room, took off my shoes, and put me in bed and still never said a word. I was exhausted, and I let him take care of me. I am amazed at the depth of his compassion, he amazes me everyday. I love you Sissy, D. Thursday September 12

Midway, Florida Melissa, Mulder and I are on our first assignment since Lily came. She's with Mom, and having a ball from what Mom said. The kids are there, and so is Charlie. It figures that the one time he comes in, I am on assignment. Mom said that he's so buff now that we wouldn't know him. She didn't actually say buff, but I knew what she meant. Mulder is sprawled out next to me, watching wrestling. We're stuck here at the Dixieland Econo-Lodge, waiting for the storm to blow through. I had to twist Mulder's arm to get him to hold off on the exhumation until the rain cleared. He had his shovel, and boots out, ready to go. Tenacious is a good word to describe him I think. We couldn't get anyone to deliver pizza in this weather, so our dinner consists of: Doritos, M&M's, Fritos, sunflower seeds, Juju Fruits, and Pepsi. Mulder spent all of our change on the snack machines, and I told him that he would have to make up for me missing out on the Magic Fingers. He's promised to rub my back. How gallant. I am not looking forward to this case. Five teenage boys have been found naked, in the cemetery, clutching dead frogs. My initial conclusion is that these young men are reacting to psycho-tropic drugs that the frogs secrete. You know about the frog licking, I'm sure. However, one young man is dead so far, and the others are still in a state of delirium. Enough about work. We called Lily a while ago, she's having so much fun that we could barely keep her on the phone. I get the distinct impression that we miss her much more than she misses us. Mulder just took off his shirt. I don't know if he knows what he does to me, or if he is genuinely oblivious. I've never seen him working out, yet, his abs are incredible. I would give anything to run my fingers up and down his back. Oh- he's watching me again. I can feel the blood creeping up my cheeks. He's got my hairbrush-Gotta go Sissy ----D. Dana smiled to herself, thinking of that night at the Econo-Lodge. Mulder had been quite playful. Convincing her to play a game of truth or dare. She had nearly revealed her greatest secret to him, when his phone rang. The Sheriff had found another body. Her back rub would have to wait. She thought about going out into the living room and having him rub her back now. It was spasming, and her belly was becoming tight, as contractions ripped through her. Just as quickly, they would end, leaving her wondering if she was imagining them. There was still no definable pattern, and the last contraction had been the first one in nearly twenty minutes. Dana decided to wait. The phone rang, and Lily became quiet while Mulder talked. Mulder poked his head in the door of the den. He looked concerned, but she was adept at assuaging his fear. "Doc you all right? I can call Dr. French if you think it's time." "No, Mulder, I don't think it's time, I still have another two weeks to go, and it feels just like the other two times. I'm fine. Is Lily getting ready for bed?" She closed the last entry that she had been reading in case he decided to sit next to her. He did not. "She's brushing her teeth. Can I bring you anything? Gryph is going home for the night, and I have to step out for a bit. Work." "No, I'm fine, I'll be going to bed soon, just finishing my diary. Did Payton call

you back with that toxicology report?" "Yeah, she did, but you're not supposed to be working, and that includes consulting. Even if it's just over the phone. She can read it herself, Skinner told me that they call her The Spider because she's supposedly an expert on poisons, and exotic weapons. Besides, Skinner wouldn't have assigned her to the X-Files if she couldn't handle it." "I'm not being replaced, am I?" She looked up at him half jokingly. "Not in a million years. She's on loan from VCS until you decide if you want to return. I personally am hoping that you will, for selfish reasons of course." He stepped to her side, and began rubbing her shoulders. "And what reasons might those be?" She closed her eyes, and let the tension drain from her neck. "No other field agents have the privilege of having sex with their partners in sleazy road side motels. I kind of enjoy the status. Not to mention the fact that you're the smartest, and prettiest agent in the F.B.I. You also look better in a skirt than most of the agents I've been paired with since you left." "Payton's cute." "So are you." "No interest in your partner?" "You are, and always will be my partner Scully, besides, I've only got eyes for you. Especially since you started carrying my progeny. Why don't you go up to bed? You need your rest." "Just let me finish up here. You go on. Should I wait up for you?" She clicked on another entry, as he walked towards the door. "No, I don't know how long this will take. Try not to worry, I'll be careful." He looked at her, "Promise, Scully." "I promise." She watched him leave and looked back down at her computer. Maybe it was their son's impending birth that was causing her nostalgia, but she couldn't help reviewing those first days with her new family. Wednesday September 18, Melissa, I had the nightmare again last night. I don't know what's causing my anxiety, but it's the third night in a row. I guess it got really bad last night. Mulder had crawled in bed next to me. I awoke with his arms around me, and for one moment, I could almost see our future together. At breakfast this morning, he asked me to move into his bedroom, to try to prevent the nightmares. He said that he's noticed that I don't have them when he's in the room with me. He's right. I feel so protected, that I never get to that state. I guess I will, considering my screaming has been scaring Lily. I didn't even know that she had heard me. Mulder asked me about the dreams. He put his glasses on, and just like that, he was Dr. Mulder, psychologist. He let me lay across his lap while I told him what usually happens. I had to close my eyes, to see everything clearly, and he told me to slow my breathing. His voice is so deep, and rich, it resonates with such feeling, I was instantly calmed. The dream begins with Mulder and I walking through a long hallway. He is holding my hand, and I feel something brush against my leg. I look down to see what it is, and it is Emily. She is trying to hold my hand, but she keeps missing. I reach out to her, but my hands are slick with perspiration. She is calling me, and I reach for her. I turn, and beg Mulder to help me, but he is no longer there. I am able to grasp Emily just before the bottom drops out of the room. I clutch her to me as we drop, faster, and faster, into a pit. When I hit the bottom, I look down at Emily, and see that I am holding the remains of a porcelain doll. I hear Mulder calling my name, but I cannot tell which direction his voice is coming from. The sound is louder, and louder, and he is begging me to hurry, Scully, hurry. I try to run, but I feel the shards of porcelain cutting my feet. I stumble forward, hoping to find Mulder. As I approach, his back is to me. I put my arms around him to tell him about Emily, and to cry, but as I get my arms around him, he shatters into dust. Donnie Pfaster is standing over me, while I kneel on the ground, trying to pick up handfuls of the dust. I hear the sound of water coming, and when I

look over my shoulder, I see that it is blood, and I am covered in it. I hear Melissa screaming for justice, and I cannot open my mouth. There is a hand over my mouth. It is Mulder's. He whispers in my ear not to look back, but I have to. When I do, I realize that it was not Mulder, but a faceless man. He reaches into my shirt to pull my heart out, just as I wake up. He's gotten very close some nights. And I wonder if I will die if he succeeds. Friday October 4, Melissa, I am planting the bulbs for my spring garden tomorrow. I am so excited. Mulder took down the hammock, that we had strung up, and a service is coming out to take down Lily's play set. They'll put it in storage for the winter, and put it back up in the spring. Remember our play set? It was cemented into the ground, and rusted over within the first six months. I'm surprised that we didn't get tetanus playing on it. We've decided to hire a housekeeper. Mulder is such a slob, and he insisted on this huge house, I can't do it all. I just can't. So far, we've interviewed three women for the position. I'd like someone who would do the groceries, laundry, dust, and keep the kitchen clean. I'm thinking of hiring someone to tend the yard once a week, but we'll have to see how our finances look at the end of the year. It probably wouldn't hurt to get someone to look after Lily. Make sure that she gets to pre-school, and playdates on time. We solved the X-File involving Mary Poppins, so I don't know who to look for. I have to go, Mulder's back with pizza. Love you. D. Tuesday October 8, Sissy, We hired a young woman named Vicki, she seems bright enough, but, I'm not sure I trust her. She kept giving Mulder the eye. And of course he was giving it right back. Lily doesn't need that. And neither do I if I'm honest with you, and myself. We'll see how this goes for a while. I got the schematic for my garden, it will be gorgeous, five different kinds of roses, jonquils, crocuses, daffodils. It will be nice to sit in the gazebo and read during the summer. Mulder is building a stone fireplace. Yes, Mulder. I know it's a bit of a shock to you but he is doing a great job. He's got the guys over nearly every night. It's nice to see him so relaxed, and developing friendships. He needs a break from the chase, and this has been the perfect outlet for him. I can't help wondering if he's adding secret compartments to the foundation though. Mulder told me that Frohike and Langley have come up with a new nickname for me. "Psycho-Sexual Sexterrestrial." They wanted gory details about our sex life. Mulder is too much of a gentleman to tell them that we aren't having sex. Not because I don't want to though. It's all I think about lately. I was fantasizing about him last night, and I knew that he and Lily were at Mom's, so, I started touching myself. I haven't done that in a long time, but I couldn't resist anymore. I could feel his hands on me. I could feel his breath at the nape of my neck, and I imagined that I could feel him inside of me. I looked up, and he was standing just barely in the doorway. I closed my eyes, and pretended that I hadn't seen him. I lifted my hips off of the bed, knowing that he was probably getting turned on. He hasn't had any in a while either. I kept moaning, and slid my fingers deeper inside. I could hear soft rustling in the hall way, and I barely glanced in his direction. I kept working my hand in and out, and I let myself get worked up. I was ready to let him know that it was him that I wanted. I allowed myself to call his name, and when I looked back to the doorway, he was gone. I don't know if he heard me or not. After I came, I went to find him. He was changing into his running clothes, and he wouldn't look at me. I think that I embarrassed him. Either that, or he wants me too. Why won't he just say something? D. Tuesday October 15, Melissa, We had to fire Vicki. It only took one week. Mulder came home early to retrieve a file that we'd been working on, and found her wearing his bathrobe. She was laying in our bed, but

Mulder wouldn't tell me what she was doing. I guess he knew that I would be livid. We have another option. Mulder knows a guy from The Vineyard, who he says would appreciate the work. His name is Gryphon Kleina. He was a friend of Mulder's mother before he lost everything to alcoholism. He's been sober for 13 years now, and Mulder thinks that he would do a great job. I was concerned that he might not want to do domestic work, but he's been washing dishes at the Washingtonian Hotel for the last five years. He speaks English quite well, and is fluent in French, Italian, and Spanish. His native tongue is Russian, so whichever language Lily chooses to study, we've got her covered. I'm going crazy sleeping next to Mulder every night. I listen to him breathing, and I have fantasies about him holding me. Some nights, I've intentionally whimpered a few times just to get his arms around me. Even in his sleep, he is aware of me. I kissed his back last night, after I was certain that he was asleep. I know that I am getting bold, but one of us has to make a move. It probably won't be him, after that attempted kiss. I can't believe that I was carrying that bee around with me all that time, and he chose to rear his ugly little head just as I was going to find out if he loves me, once and for all. I am going to tell him this weekend. I'm going to make him dinner, sneak up behind him, and tell him that I love him with all of my heart. I hope that he doesn't laugh. I won't be able to stand it if he does. Love you, D. Thursday October 31st Sissy, Lily, was adorable tonight. Mom made her the cutest bee costume. Mulder tries so hard to be subtle sometimes, but this one was glaring. He's still upset about the kiss that never was. I've wanted to bring it up, but I think he thinks that I was upset about it. He kept apologizing. I wasn't upset, just surprised. We let the guys take her out this evening, after we took her to her friends' homes, up and down our block. They know where the good stuff is given out, so we allowed her to go out with them. Secretly, Lily has a crush on Langley. She declared that he was her boyfriend, last night over dinner. He is being a sport about it. Letting her dote on him. Lily called me Mommy today, for the first time. It made me smile, like nothing has for quite a while. Dr. Mulder told me that Lily has become attached to me, and that she is adjusting well to living with us. Every time he puts on the glasses, I see Dr. Mulder, psychologist. Lily must see it too, she is only candid with him when he is wearing them. Later, he and I watched a movie. It got us talking about all kinds of topics. I'm too tired to relate them all here, but mainly, Mulder and I talked about what it means to be in love. It was the closest that we've ever been to discussing our relationship. It seems unusual to have to discuss these things, considering we're already married, but we both know that it was merely convenience. Someday maybe, when things are a little different, maybe he and I can come to some sort of understanding. Where he knows that I love him, and he respects my feelings, even if he doesn't feel the same way. I'm falling asleep, I will write more later. Love you, D. Monday November 4 Melissa, Mulder and I are on assignment again. We're in Ogunquit, Maine working with another pair of agents, that needed a consult from Mulder. I don't know why we couldn't do this on the phone, or via computer, except Mulder's intrigue was piqued. We had the biggest argument on the way up here. He thinks that I don't understand the pressure that he's under at work, being a parent, when I'm going through the same things. I don't care what he says, it is still more difficult to be a female agent, and parent, than being a man. People don't expect the same things from him that they expect from me. So, we fought and bickered, and now that we are here, we're still not communicating. There isn't any place for us to stay-- all of the hotels are closed for the season.

The Bureau was able to find a house for us to rent- so not only are Mulder and I not getting along, we're stuck in this house with two other agents. We don't have the privacy that we need to resolve this. Agent Cassill, and his partner the very blonde, and very leggy Agent April Putnam, invited us out to dinner and of course, Mulder ignored me the entire time. Agent Cassill, or Bob, as he told everyone within earshot to call him, couldn't keep his hands to himself for a good portion of the night. I kept waiting for Mulder to say something, but he wouldn't even look at me. I know that they noticed. Meanwhile, Miss April- (She would be better suited to doing porn than being a Federal Agent) decided that Mulder is fair game. I suppose he is, considering he and I don't really have any type of agreement. Spoken or otherwise. I should have come up with a contingency plan. I should have known that something like this would come up sooner or later. He's out with her right now. That Bastard. I wonder if he told her that I'm the Mrs. Mulder that he referred to earlier, when she asked him out. So how did he end up with her tonight , you ask? Evidence, she said. And since I don't know much about the witch trials, I was of very little use to the investigation, in fact, I should just go on home. To paraphrase Mulder. I hope he's miserable. As miserable as I am sitting here in the dark, waiting for him to get back, like some teenager. I think I hear him, more later D. That was him. We fought again. He walked out. I'm glad he left, I don't want him to see how hurt I am. Well that's not true. I'm not glad that he left, I wish that I had just told him and gotten it over with. He'd be here with me. He said that he's going running. Back to April? I have no right to know. This is what Mom was getting at . I feel possessive of him, we have a child together, but it's not the same is it? It's not the same as it is for other wives who can expect love, sex, and faithfulness. Mulder and I need to talk. We need to settle this. D. Tuesday November 5, Melissa, We're home, and things are greatly improved. Mulder came back just after I finished last night's entry. He wanted to talk too. He said that he felt horrible about the way that he treated me yesterday, and that he should have defended me against Bob the octopus. He told me that after he left the first time- to go over evidence with April, she told him that she was attracted to him, and that she didn't care that he was married. When he told her that I am his wife, her story changed a bit. However she was undaunted. Mulder requested that we be removed from the case, and he came and got me so that we could be home just after Lily woke up this morning. I must admit, I expected Mulder to go through with it. I was surprised that he felt obligated to me. We talked on the plane-He apologized, and I forgave him. We still haven't had a chance to discuss our situation. We were interrupted. I promise I will get to it Sissy. Love you, D. Tritium Computer Company 8:45 P.M. Mulder pulled into the parking lot and looked around. It was deserted, and the orange arc-sodium lamps cast an eerie glow over everything. He got out of the car, and unhooked the latch on his holster. He stepped into the light, as he saw a young woman approaching him. " What do you have so far?" "I'm still having the information decoded, but if I took the right files, I should know by tomorrow. I need a few more hours to determine where they're hiding Samantha. I suspect it's in Canada. Have you talked to Payton recently?" "This evening. She still doesn't suspect anything." " I hate leaving her out of the loop like this-" " I understand, but we need to keep the risk minimal." " How is Scully?" "She's well. Are you still all right with this? You can back out of this if it feels too dangerous." " No, I'm okay, I accepted this assignment because I believe in the work that you're doing. I've learned a lot from you these last two years, and this is my way of thanking you, and Scully. Payton and I really respect what

you're doing in the Bureau, and if my connection to Krycek is helpful, then we should exploit it. Not to mention that if it wasn't for Scully, Payton and I would never have passed organic chemistry, she really helped us out." "We appreciate your help." Mulder watched her pull out a key ring. "I just want to finalize the details, and also, Here is a copy of my house key. If something should happen to me, there are a few things that I need you to take care of for me. There is a compartment in my fireplace that no one knows about, not even Payton. There are some documents, and some cash that I need you to disburse." She pushed her hair away from her face, and looked at him. "I can have someone else do it, if you're not comfortable." He looked down at her, and realized that he had been distracted. "No, it's not that, I'm sorry. It's Samantha, to be so close again. I'm not even sure that she'll welcome the intrusion, I just have to see for myself that she is all right." "I saw her about four months ago with Morley, she looked happy. We were in Michigan- I didn't get to speak to her, but she is well." She placed her hand on his arm. "Agent Mulder, I'm sorry that she is hesitant to talk to you, I understand, my birth mother refused to see me, and I'd searched for five years. Maybe after she understands the truth, after she sees Morley for what he really is, she'll come around." Mulder shook his head, slowly, and sighed. He wanted to believe that Elliott was right, but the last time he had seen Samantha, she pushed him aside. Maybe it was time to move on, to let things go. "Agent Mulder?" Elliott stepped towards the car with the keys in her hand. "Can you tell me anything about where Strughold is hiding? Or Krycek, if you can tell me Krycek's aliases, that would help." "I can't just yet. I don't want you rushing off to find the answers without adequate information. Give me a few more days, I promise, I'll tell you everything." "Let's go someplace a little more private, there's specific stuff I want you to look for this time." Mulder looked around again, and satisfied that they weren't being watched, opened the passenger door for Agent Elliott. She climbed in beside him, and they drove off. Mulder residence 8:55 P.M. Dana shifted in her chair, she still couldn't get comfortable, and she reached for the mouse, to shut down her computer. She couldn't though. She felt compelled to search - for what exactly, she wasn't sure. What *am* I searching for? She asked herself. You know Dana. You're looking for the evidence that was always right there. Mulder has always loved you. You were just too blind to see it. Dana sat back down, awareness seeping through her like a breeze. She began searching in earnest, skipping entries, looking for the significant dates. She moved ahead to Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The bracelet, the leather edition of Moby Dick, the dinner that he made for them. Their interrupted kiss next to the Christmas tree. Their uninterrupted kiss at a New Year's Eve party, and again at home later. She thought back to that night and wondered why he had stopped her. She'd begun to take off her gown, and let her hair down. He had gone running, and she was asleep when he returned. She continued skipping entries, it's in here somewhere, she thought. She tried to think back to the details surrounding the incident, it was warm, that means spring, possibly summer. She searched through May, then started on June. There was something else fueling her search, not just proof of his feelings, and she began to feel like time was of the essence. Saturday June 13, Melissa, I don't know where to start on this one. Mulder and I were having a pleasant conversation over dinner, and then the phone rang. He said hello, then he took off. I haven't seen him since. I'm worried about him. It's not like him to take off without telling me. We made an agreement since Lily came. It's three a.m. I tried his cell phone, I've tried Frohike's, Gryphon's not answering, it's

Later. Sorry I was so abrupt, the phone rang. It was Mulder. Someone broke into Gryphon's house, and beat him up pretty badly. He rushed over to the hospital, and waited until Gryphon regained consciousness. Gryphon doesn't remember much, just two men waiting for him when he got home. Mulder was pretty shaken up when he got here. I didn't realize how close he and Gryphon were. I gave him a back rub, and he started telling me things. Things that I never expected to hear from him. About his fears, his weaknesses, his strengths, and his loves. He told me that he wants us to be closer than we are now. He wants another child. I know in my heart that he loves me. His eyes gave him away. He'd run off without his keys, and when I answered the door, I saw it. He asked if Lily and I were okay, he put his arms around me, and wouldn't let me go. He kept brushing my hair behind my ear with his hand, and pulling me to his chest, as if he's worried about me. Then, he would hold me at arm's length, look me up and down, and hold me again. He said that he doesn't deserve me, or Lily, and that maybe he should give up the fight. That it wasn't worth the cost. I couldn't make sense out of any of it. Why would Gryphon's assault cause Mulder to consider giving up the X-Files? Dana scanned through two more entries before she found the second item that she was looking for, a name for their son. Mulder had mentioned it one evening while they were sharing a bottle of wine in the gazebo. She closed her diary, shut down the computer, and stood up. She was stunned to see that she was sitting in a warm puddle of water. " Oh God. Mulder? Mulder?" How had this happened? Was she so engrossed in her search that she had missed the obvious signs- Her mom told her to watch for a cleaning fit, and that the contractions may be random. She had chalked it up to old wives' tales, but she had to admit, she had spent all of yesterday rearranging Lily's closets, their bathroom, and their linen closet. "Mulder, I need you-" She didn't want to wake Lily, but she wasn't sure that she could make it across the room without doubling over. The contractions were quick, and strong, much stronger than the previous ones. " Hey Scully, are you calling me? Doc, it's time isn't it? Why didn't you say so earlier, I would have taken you to the hospital." He crossed the room, and offered her his arm. " I'm calling Dr. French. She can meet us at the hospital. I need to call Mom, and have her stay with Lily." "I promised Lily that she could be there to watch-" " We don't know how long it's going to be, besides, it's nearly ten o'clock. let's just have Mom stay with her, and she can come in the morning. All the books say that the first child takes hours and hours." " This isn't my first child, Mulder." She couldn't look at him. She knew that he was wounded. She hadn't meant for it to sound snappish, she was in pain. He'd understand right? " Sorry." He led her to the living room, and sat her down on the couch. " I'll get your bag, and the c.d. player. Soft music right?" She nodded, and he continued to get their things ready. "You just breathe, Scully, just like we've been doing for weeks, come on, let me hear it." He disappeared into the kitchen while she breathed in and out. It didn't seem to be helping. " Mulder, I know that we talked about a drug free delivery, but if I chicken out-" "You won't. I'll be there coaching you, and you will do just fine. Keep breathing." He sat a cooler down beside the door. Mostly juice and water to keep Scully hydrated. "But if I can't do it, you won't be mad will you? I might need the drugs is what I'm getting at. If it gets worse than this- OH! OH God!." " I want to hear some breathing out there, come on." "You breathe, you son of a bitch, it isn't working." Mulder stopped what he was doing, and looked at Scully. He noticed that her brow was furrowed, and beaded with sweat. Like she was straining. " NO! You're pushing, stop that Scully! NO!" " I can't help it, I need to push." " This isn't

happening. Why is this going so quickly? Dana, slow down don't push yet. Look at me, -Hey, look at me. All right, we don't have time to get to the hospital, so you're going to have to help me. I'm going to take you upstairs to our bed. You are going to have to talk me through this Scully. I need you to focus. Do not push, I'm calling Mom. Stay right here." "I'll be waiting right here." She collapsed back into the sofa, as the contraction subsided. Vague memories began to flood her consciousness, unseen hands, forcing her legs apart. Men in white uniforms circling her. A baby crying. My baby. Give her to me. NO! Where are you taking her? Please come back, come back, Our baby! Mulder, they're taking our baby. Emily? Dana sat up, and realized that she had fallen asleep. She moved the mouse, and saved the last entry-- She thought that she had gotten up to go to bed. She shut down her computer, and stood up. Realizing that her water must have broken while she slept. That would explain that part of my dream, she thought. She looked at the clock on the mantle, 9:30. The contractions were strong and regular now. She hoped that Mulder would be home soon. But with her luck, he was on a jet bound for Tahiti. "Mulder, please don't miss this. Please." She laid on the sofa in the living room, and waited for him to return. Thursday 11:41 P.M. Mulder put his key in the lock, and entered quietly so as not to wake Scully. He found her on the sofa panting. "Scully, why aren't you in bed?" " Mulder, I was afraid that you wouldn't get here in time. We need to get to the hospital." "It's time?" He grinned at her, and she smiled weakly. " Yes, Mulder, it's time." Friday, 3:13 A.M. "How are you feeling?" Mulder wiped Scully's forehead with a wash cloth, and pushed dampened curls out of her face. "I'm okay, I could use some water, is that all right Carol?" The nurse looked up from the fetal heart monitor, and took Dana's hand. "Sweetie I'm going to get Dr. French to come down, You're about seven centimeters. She lives ten minutes away, so it won't take long. You just hang on until then all right? Mr. Mulder, She can have ice chips, and small sips of water, you just keep talking to her, and keep her calm." " Is something wrong? Is there something you're not telling us? Please don't think that you're protecting us, we need the truth." "All right, the baby's heart rate is dropping. It often happens when the baby enters the birth canal, but Dana's heart rate is dropping also, so I'd like to be safe. You may need an emergency C-section, and you should probably begin discussing your wishes regarding rescue efforts if the baby codes. But try not to worry, this sometimes happens, we'll do everything that we can." She started to leave the room, and was stopped by Dana's tiny voice. " Carol, thanks." Dana closed her eyes, and bit her lip, as another contraction gripped her. " Come on, Scully, you can do it. Breathe, breathe, breathe, and deep breath, come on, that's it." He took her hand as she laid back on the bed. " Mulder, if something goes wrong, please, I want you to save the baby. Don't worry about me." " What are you talking about ,Scully? Nothing's going to happen to you or the baby. Don't talk like that." He turned his back to her, and got her a cup of ice chips. " I mean it Mulder, if something goes wrong-" "Come on, Dana, this kid's half Scully, half Mulder, nothing's going to happen. " Mulder, I just want you to be prepared, in case-" She stared at his back, he would not look at her. Another contraction worked it's way across her abdomen. "Scully, I don't want to live in a world that doesn't include you. You're my love, my life, don't ask me to do this. I know this sounds selfish, but you've lost like I have, you understand." He turned, and took her hand in his. "This will work out. Because of the strength of your beliefs, I believe in a balanced universe, and I have paid my debts to the cosmos. You're not going anywhere, and neither is he." Mulder placed his hands on her belly, and stared into her eyes

intently. Dr. French came in a few minutes later, and began looking at the fetal monitor, and checking Scully's chart. " Dana, I'm not concerned, but just in case, I'd like you to be prepared for a C-section. I know that you and Fox may have been worried, and I apologize for Carol's candor, she should have spoken with me first. She never should have worried you with the possibility of the baby going into cardiac arrest, this often happens when the baby has been stalled in the birth canal. I'm going to recommend that we give you a little Pitocin, all right, and you try and get a short nap. Mr. Mulder, you look like you could use a break too. Maybe you should lie down and have someone else coach Dana for a while." "I'm not going anywhere. Junior here is just taking his time. Right little guy." He rubbed her belly gently, and smiled down at her. " Oh God, this one's really bad." Dana squeezed Fox's hand and sat up, breathing heavily. " Nancy, can I please have something for the pain? I can't do this anymore, I'm so tired." She closed her eyes, and laid her head back. " You've already gone beyond the point where medication would be effective. I promise, the worst of it is almost over. You get to push soon." Dr. French pulled the stirrups up, and lifted Dana's legs into them. Mulder rubbed her abdomen lovingly, and her eyes flew open. " Don't -Don't touch me. But don't leave. Just hold my hand, Fox." " You okay, Scully?" He moved to touch her cheek, but thought better of it, and put his hand back down to the side of her bed. " Yeah Mulder, just don't touch me- it feels weird." Dr. French gave Mulder a half smile, and patted his hand. " A lot of women go through a phase where they are extremely sensitive to touch, please don't take it personally. Dana, get ready to push, we're going to try this vaginally first, then, if nothing happens, we'll bring out the big guns okay?" Dr. French put her glasses on, and a new nurse entered the room to assist. She began to undo the strap on the fetal monitor, as the beeps became irregular, then went back to normal. 3:25 A.M. Mulder met Scully's gaze and held it. He was trying to keep her calm, but he knew it was only a matter of moments before she would ask what was going on. She was exhausted, and had fallen asleep several times in the last few minutes. Dr. French had given him a strange look, just as the fetal monitor went nuts. The signal was doubling again, as though confused. Scully became aware of the noise, and tried to sit up. " Mulder, what is it? Is something wrong with the baby?" " No, honey, just the machine, it's okay." 3:35 A.M. Dana woke up as they were disconnecting the fetal monitor. She looked around, confused. Mulder was still standing over her. "Nancy wants to do the C-section just as a precaution. Everything is all right, I promise." He leaned down and kissed her. Her lips were dry, and cracked. He could see dried blood, from her biting her lower lip. He slid an ice chip over her lips, and placed another into her mouth. He wiped her brow, and squeezed her hand three times. She tried to smile at him, but the smile faded, as she saw the shadow cross his face. " Mulder, there's something that you're not telling me." " Dana-" Dr. French interrupted him. " Dana, we aren't keeping anything from you, the baby is fine, just hold on to Fox's hand, while we prep you for the incision. You'll feel some pressure, but you shouldn't feel any pain. Let me know if you do. Dr. French had called in two other doctors to assist her while Dana was asleep. The nurses draped a green surgery sheet over the area, and she could only hear them working on her. Dana looked over the monitors, checking her vitals. They had unplugged the fetal monitor, and taken the belt from her waist, so she had no idea what condition the baby was in. She felt the fear welling up inside of her. What if the baby had died, and Mulder was afraid to tell her. What if the baby was deformed somehow. What if- " Dana," Mulder was calling to her. She looked up at him, trying to

make out the words, as he said them. She was so tired. Her eye lids felt like sand bags. " Sweetheart, it's a boy, and a girl. We've got twins." He was laughing, and crying, as the nurses weighed their babies, and placed them in warming bassinets. " What ? How - but-how? I mean- Why didn't we know?" She was fully awake now, and they had removed the cloth blocking her view of the twin cradles. Dr. French answered her question, as Mulder brought first their son, then their daughter to Scully's arms. " Dana, I apologize, we made a mistake- I don't know what to say. My technician made a note in your chart documenting the echoes that he heard but, we didn't think anything of it. We hear echoes all the time. I know that when I read your sonogram, I didn't see a second uterine sac, but when we did the Caesarean, we discovered that your daughter was behind your son. Again, I apologize for the-" " Nancy, don't worry about it- It's not important. Mulder, what are we going to do with two babies?" " You've got me. We don't even have a name for jr. here, let alone little Scully. God, Dana, look at them. They're as beautiful as you are." He kissed the top of her head, as he gazed down at his family. " We do have a name for jr. It's the name that you told me about while we were in the gazebo." " Scully, are you serious? That's all right with you?" " Yeah Mulder, that's fine with me." She smiled at him, and he smiled back at her. A nurse took the babies to place ID bracelets on them, and laid them in their glass warmers. " What about his sister? He brought his own skeptic you know." "Yeah, maybe she'll keep him grounded, and keep him from getting into trouble." " Somehow, I doubt that." Mulder stared at her, and when she looked up at him, he said, "I love you, Scully." She smiled back at him, closed her eyes, and fell asleep.

McNeil Memorial Hospital Room 524 8:00 A.M. Dana closed her eyes and rolled over. The nurse had just taken the babies back to the nursery, and tried to get a few hours rest. Exhaustion washed over her, and she felt herself drifting downward. She was nearly asleep when she smelled the unmistakable odor of- Her eyes flew open. "What are you doing here? You're not going to take my babies, I'll have every Fed in this-" "Mrs. Mulder, I understand your caution. But I assure you that I am not here to take your children from you. I came merely to offer my congratulations. I have been a friend of the Mulder family since before Fox was born. I feel almost ---paternal towards him." " How did you get past Mulder? He still doesn't trust you." " Mulder took your daughter downstairs for breakfast. I only wanted to see for myself how your children were." He turned to leave, and Scully stopped him. "Wait. I have a question for you." She pulled the sheet around herself unconsciously trying to brace herself. " I want you to answer me honestly." She stared at him, at the lines in his face, and into his eyes. She didn't know whether or not she would be able to see a lie in his eyes, but she wanted to try. "Who was Emily's father?" His facade flickered for a moment. He hadn't been expecting that question. Scully saw the hesitation, and waited for his response. "I think that you know who her father was." " But how is that possible? I mean, he's never been abducted-" " Not abducted, but detained, yes. Tunguska, Scully. Samples were taken from all of the men." " But why not someone else? Why Mulder?" " That was not divulged to me. I really must be going" " No, please just tell me, if she was Mulder's, then why did she die? Why was the alien DNA-" " She was a test subject for 'Purity Control'. The alien DNA was introduced later. To test the vaccine. I cannot answer anymore of your questions. Congratulations, again." He turned to leave. " We didn't get to thank you." Scully called after him. Mulder walked in with Lily, and stood in the doorway. " What was he doing here?" " We'll talk later. Hi sweetie, I can't wait until I can give you a big hug." " Where are the babies, Mommy?" Lily looked around expectantly. "

They're in the nursery, I was going to have breakfast, and then take a shower. Will the two of you stay here, and wait for the nurse to bring the twins back? Mom is coming down around nine and Bill is supposed to be coming down just before I get discharged." "Remind me to be in the gift shop." Mulder smirked at Scully, and she threw him a disapproving glance. A patient technician brought in Dana's breakfast, and Mulder pulled the table around to Scully. "Save that delicious green jello for me, Scully." "Daddy you hate jello." Lily grabbed Dana's marshmallows. "Daddy is trying to be funny, sweetie." Dana ate her breakfast, and Mulder helped her into the shower. A short time later, a nurse wheeled the twins in, and Mulder placed one in Lily's arms. "What do you think, Lily? Do you like being a big sister?" "Yes, Daddy. He is so tiny. Hi Jake, are you going to open your eyes? Daddy, what color are his eyes?" "They're blue right now, but they usually change in a few weeks. Unless they stay blue like yours." "Can I hold Saren now?" "Sure, Pixie, let me put her down, then, I'll take Jake." A short time later, Margaret Scully came in, and Mulder placed each of the babies into her arms. Lily left with Margaret, and Mulder pulled a chair up to Scully's bedside. "She looked so happy." Mulder took Dana's hand and held it. "She is happy. She's got a whole brood of grandchildren, and she got you for a son-in-law." "Are you happy, Dana?" She nodded, looked into his eyes, and felt her heart melting. He was so insecure sometimes. All the reassurance in the world wasn't enough when you had lost so much. So many people. She thought about Samantha, his father, and Gryphon's son Jake. Jake had been Mulder's best friend growing up. He was killed on a ski trip when he and Mulder were 17. She thought about that night in the gazebo when he'd told her about Jake. About the guilt that he'd felt when Gryphon saw the rescue team sledding down the hill without Jake's body. Mulder felt like he owed Gryphon- Gryphon had sank into a deep depression, and became an alcoholic later that winter. "I am happy, Mulder. Can I ask you something? Were you ever going to ask me out?" "As a matter of fact, the day I found out about Jenny's death, I was going to ask you out." "So, that's what that was all about. I was starting to think that maybe Eddie Van Blunht had gotten released. What made you change your mind about policy? I mean you were dead set against any kind of personal relationship." "You made me change my mind. The Monday before Lily's accident, I'd had a horrible nightmare. I dreamed that I didn't get to you in time when you were in Antarctica. I dreamed that you were taken from me forever, and that I never got a chance to tell you that I love you. I've loved you since- since before you were abducted. I couldn't tell you then. I was afraid that you would laugh at me. Or worse, give me that look, and a pat on the hand- you know what I'm talking about, don't laugh." "It's funny, I was thinking the same thing for so long. You know what's ridiculous is that we could analyze, and categorize, every killer that we came across, but we couldn't figure out that we had the hots for each other." "It's not funny. Do you know how many tapes I had to buy to keep you out of my head? You have no idea how many nights when we were on stake-outs, I just wanted to touch your face. Or, hold your hand, and tell you that I called you my baby in my head. I was secretly pleased when agents called you Mrs. Spooky. It made me feel like you really belonged to me." He looked down at their clasped hands, and she moved the hair out of his eyes with her free hand. "I belong to you now." She moved her hand down to his cheek, and cupped it. He turned his head, and kissed her palm. "Scully, what was Old Smoky doing here earlier?" "He wanted to see how the babies were. And he wanted to say congratulations." "We don't owe him anything, Scully, you don't have to entertain his whims. He is nothing to us. I don't want him

dropping in and appeasing his desire to-" "He just wanted to know."
"What about everything that we've wanted to know? Where were his answers? Why does he get his questions answered?" " Mulder- He did give me an answer. Just not the one that you're looking for." " Did he tell you where my sister is?" " No." She looked down. He would not be happy about this. " Then what did he tell you? What answers, Scully? Did he tell you why your eggs were taken from you? Why you were abducted, and by whom?" He felt himself growing more and more sarcastic, but he was angry, and Smoky had all the answers. " He didn't tell me anything about that , but he did tell me something that I've been wanting to know for a very long time. He told me who Emily's father was." Mulder stood up, and ran his hand through his hair. " Go ahead, who?" " You, Mulder." She looked down. She didn't want to see the look on his face when he realized that he had lost someone else. Someone that he didn't even know that he loved. She saw him turn around, and place his hands on his hips. " I knew, Scully. Don't ask me how, but , I knew. Maybe there's something there that we recognize in our children, but I knew." " I'm sorry, Mulder. I'm sorry that our daughter didn't get to know that you were her father. But I know that she knew how much you cared for her." " Did he say why they chose to use me as the father?" " He said that he wasn't told. I think that it was someone's idea of a sick joke. Everyone around us could see how much you and I meant to each other, maybe they thought that it would be amusing if-" "There's nothing amusing about killing our daughter." " Mulder, I'm sorry, I know that this is hard, I was only trying to make sense of what has happened." A nurse wheeled the babies back in, and Mulder placed them each in Scully's arms. " Scully, Promise me that nothing will ever happen to our family. Promise me that no matter what, all of the death and the pain stops here." " All I can promise you is that I will love you, and our children with all of my heart, and I hope that that will be enough." " Tell me again, like you did the first time, tell me that you love me." " I do, Mulder, I love you." He kissed his son's head, and then his daughter's, and sat down next to his wife. He watched the way that she nourished his children, and it gave him a measure of hope. That finally, everything could be okay. Washington D.C. 3:15 P.M. The tall gentleman pulled his trench coat closed, and pulled out a cigarette as he approached her from the parking lot. He offered one to her, and she took it. This meeting was not going to go well. She had her orders, and he was asking her to ignore them. For the sake of Agent Mulder. She knew that he would never tell her why he continued to protect Mulder, but she felt like she had to try. " You called." She felt the gun in it's holster, undone, just in case. You could never be too careful with these people. " Yes. I did. I know what you've been told to do, and I want you to walk away from this. I can handle this alone." " They don't feel like you can, you seem to be protecting Mulder for some reason, and they won't tolerate it." She saw him wince with anger. " So I'm being followed now. I expected this, just not from you." " You know why I'm here." " No, I don't know . Not really, and I don't care. We all have our own agenda. Mine does not involve you." " It involves me. I've been given instructions. You know that I have to kill her. She has been exposed to the virus, and the vaccine. If they continue- God knows what they will find out about the coloniz-" She felt his hand on her arm suddenly, it was near breaking. " I said leave it. This is my kill. Do you hear me? I have a score to settle. You don't rush in and attack your enemy. You give them what they want. You let them get comfortable, and then you strike. Did they teach you nothing at Quantico, Agent Elliott.?" " Strughold feels like he can no longer trust you. You seem to be protecting Mulder. You seem to be

personally involved. I am going to kill her. And if that means that I have to kill you in the process, then so be it." Agent Elliott pulled her arm away from his grasp, and flashed him her gun. " You can try, Agent Elliott, better killers than you have tried. And failed. But you listen to me- This is my debt. This is my kill, do you understand?" "You've been warned." He turned around to face her again, and she felt her heart stop. " You warning me? Maybe it is you who need to be warned. You cannot be trusted. I know what you're up to. I know the tactics, you're working for Skinner. You're getting sloppy. A word of advice, Agent Elliott, find yourself a new identity." She felt herself trembling as he stepped past her. Mulder was right. This guy was ice. Nothing rattled him. What was she thinking trying to scare him? Strughold hadn't ordered Scully killed, he was only testing, probing to see if he could still trust his number one killer. Or maybe he was testing her. Agent Elliott stared at the man's receding figure. She needed to contact Mulder with her findings. She thought back to the night of the warehouse fire, when she'd gone missing. It was all part of her cover, and she'd gotten in close to Strughold through Krycek, and dumb luck. She sat in her car and stared ahead, terrified to move. If Strughold found out, This guy would be after her. She was still trembling thinking about the danger that she had placed herself in. There was a simple solution to the problem, simple but terrifying. First, she had a phone call to make. Agent Elliott drove down to the river, and stepped out of her car. There was a phone booth next to the cannery. She placed a scrambling device up to the mouth piece of the phone, and dialed Skinner's number. They had worked this scenario so many times, yet it felt unreal now to be going through with it. Skinner picked up the private line directly, so that her call would not be logged through the P.B.X. station. " You're in danger?" " Yes sir." She heard her the quivering in her voice, and wondered if he heard it too. " Do you have a final report?" " Yes, Morley is definitely out to settle some sort of score with Mulder and Scully, but I didn't find out why." She told him about their conversation, and heard him taking notes. She also told him that her position was compromised, and he sighed before replying. "Are you sure? I don't want you to do this if you're wrong." " I'm certain, Sir. I don't have a choice. Morley told me to get a new identity." " We can do that-" " Sir, I've seen the inner workings of this organization, there's no where where I can be safe. I'll never have a moment's rest. I'll always be waiting for the gunshot to come, and I can't live like that. I knew what the risk was when I took this assignment. I just wish that I could have been more successful. I won't be there to assist my friends." She turned the capsules over, and over in her hand, knowing what she was going to have to do. " So, you're going through with it. Is there anything that I can take care of for you?" "Yes, Sir." She was openly crying now, and didn't care if he could hear her or not. "Please tell Fox that I tried. I really did try to protect them sir. I know that you understand that Mulder came to me, because he trusted me. Tell him that I tri-" Skinner heard glass shatter, and heard Agent Elliott yelp. " Elliott? Elliott?" Someone hung up the phone. He snapped the lighter open, touched it to the end of his cigarette, and inhaled. " *That* was a warning, Agent Elliott." He let the smoke curl around his head, before he exhaled. He dropped an empty pack of Morley's next to the body lying in the phone booth, and walked away. To Be Continued..... Convergence. by The Liquid Sky London, Ontario 3:45 A.M. The room was dark, and it took a moment for Scully's eyes to adjust. She watched Elliott cross the room to the left side of the bed just as they had planned. Elliott switched on the bedside lamp, and as Strughold sat up, Scully pressed Elliott's gun into his

forehead. " Agent Scully, I don't believe I've had the pleasure of meeting you in person." " Shut up, you murdering Son of a Bitch. You're going to pay for killing Mulder." She slid the bolt into place, and prepared to fire. One Month Earlier McNeil Memorial Hospital 3:40 P.M. " Mulder, is that your phone ringing?" Scully was showing Lily how to change Saren's diaper, and Mulder was asleep in the chair. " Yeah, it is- Mulder?" He rubbed his eyes, and sat up slowly. " M-Mulder? It's Elliott- I don't have much time. I've been shot. Morley, thought I was dead. Have the tapes." " Where are you? I'll come and get you, just hold on." " No time- Too much blood. I hid the tapes. They're" She coughed up blood, and tried to tell Mulder where the file was hidden. "Safe deposit box Watergate Hotel, name of M.F. Mulder." "Tell me where you are, so that we can help you." " Steiner's Cannery by the river." She coughed again, and her cell phone dropped from her hand. She laid in the corner of the phone booth, and closed her eyes. " Mulder, is everything all right?" Scully watched him closely, as he put his jacket on. " I'll tell you the whole story when I get back, I promise." He leaned in and kissed her head. " Love you." "Love you too." Mulder turned, and rushed out of the room. Mulder ran to the desk, and requested an ambulance service. They followed him to Steiner's Cannery, and found Agent Elliott covered in blood, but still breathing. Mulder took her hand as she was lifted onto a gurney. " Hang on Elliott, You're going to be all right." " Tell Payton." " I will, you just worry about getting better." Mulder stepped back and let the EMT's get into the ambulance. He looked around, there were a number of warehouses, abandoned, empty. The Smoking Man could be in any one of them, watching him. Waiting to follow him to the evidence that Agent Elliott had stolen for him. Mulder got in his car, and called Elliott's partner, Agent Payton. She still thought that Agent Elliott was dead. Skinner thought it best if everyone continued to believe that she disappeared in the warehouse fire. It was easier for Elliott to infiltrate the Syndicate having severed all of her ties to the Bureau. Mulder reached for his phone, and pushed 'two' on his speed dial. 'One' was still reserved for Scully. " Payton, it's Mulder, we need to talk, and it has to be right away." He pulled out into traffic, and headed towards the Hoover building. " I'm at the airport, I think that I may have something for you." " Bring it with you, and meet me in Skinner's office." Payton hung up her phone, and looked back up at the ticket agent that she'd been speaking with. " I don't have much time, can you gather those passenger lists for me right now?" J. Edgar Hoover Building A.D. Skinner's Office 5:15 P.M. Mulder and Skinner stopped talking as Agent Payton entered the office. She took the seat on the right of Agent Mulder, and opened her briefcase. " Agent Payton, There are some things that you need to be made aware of, and then we need your help with an ongoing investigation. Please let me explain before you ask any questions. As you know, Agent Elliott disappeared during the raid on the Blue Men Militia, her disappearance was part of a cover operation that she was participating in for Agent Mulder. She infiltrated a group known as the Syndicate, I will let Agent Mulder explain more about them later. While carrying out her duties, Agent Elliott was shot by one of the men in this group. We don't yet have a name on him, we've been referring to him as Morley, the brand of cigarette that he smokes. It is likely that Agent Elliott will not survive. After she was shot, she made Agent Mulder aware that she was in possession of information crucial to this investigation. We need you to retrieve it." Skinner looked at her, and she looked at Mulder. " My partner has been alive all this time? Why couldn't you tell me? Now, she's dying, and you want me to help you?" Mulder looked at Skinner, and began

explaining. " Agent Elliott agreed that keeping this from you was best, she didn't think that it would be believable unless you behaved as if your partner was truly suspected to be dead. This is a very dangerous, and delicate mission, and it involves someone that you know to be very violent-Alex Krycek. Elliott told us that she and Krycek dated while the three of you were at the Academy. She was able to use her relationship with Krycek to get close to the top men in this organization. She became one of their assassins in the hope of gathering the evidence that we need to put these men away. She asked me to tell you the truth, she wants you to help. At least help us find the shooter." Mulder looked at the brown haired woman sitting next to him, she was angry, but she was an excellent agent, and he hoped that she would do the right thing. " What do you need from me?" Payton glared at Skinner, and waited for him to answer. " We need you to go downstairs and get an ID made. Use the name Mary Faith Luder. Afterwards, meet Agent Mulder in his office, and he'll give you more details about the Syndicate. Thank you for your help Agent Payton. That's all." Mulder and Payton stood, and exited his office. The building was clearing out, as people went home for the evening. Payton wouldn't look at Mulder, as they walked towards the elevator. " We had to do it, Margaret, I asked Carson to help me, and she agreed, but this was the only way." " You are responsible for her getting shot, Mulder, I understand what you had to do, but I'm upset. She's my best friend, she and I went to college together, and then to Quantico. Now she's dying, I don't know- It's just hard to believe-What kind of people are you dealing with here? How could you let her get involved in this without adequate back up?" " I'll explain in the office, we have to be careful where we discuss this. You can't tell anyone that Elliott is alive, the man that shot her will finish the job if he knows that she's alive. I had them pull the sheet over her head during transport in case he was watching from the warehouses where she was found. She's at the hospital under the name of Sylvia Glenn, I don't think that you should go see her right away." " What if she dies?" Mulder looked down at the floor as the elevator doors opened. They stepped inside. Mulder pushed the button, and she exited on the third floor. Basement Office 6:00 P.M. Mulder picked up the phone and dialed Scully's room at the hospital. Maggie Scully answered, and told him that Dana was eating her dinner. " Hey Baby, how's dinner?" " Fine, Mulder, what was going on? You left so quickly-" " I can't talk right now, but I'll be there tonight, and I'll tell you all about it." " I'm being discharged tonight. They trust me to go home. Since I'm a medical doctor, I guess they figure I can monitor my own condition." " How are Lily, Jake, and Saren?" " They're fine, but they miss their Dad. So does their Mom. Mulder are you sure you can't tell me what you're working on, I'm worried about you." " It has to do with Agent Elliott's disappearance." " Any news?" She picked at her chicken breast, and nibbled on a piece. " Yes, she was found, but I can't go into it on this phone. I'll tell you about it tonight. I'll be there to take the four of you home." He thought about Agent Elliott dying in the same hospital. " I love you Dana, I want you to know that." " Mulder, is everything all right? You sound a bit sentimental?" " I'm fine Scully, it's just work. I've got to go, Payton just came in." " Nine o'clock then. I love you too, Mulder." Mulder pointed to the chair across from his desk, and Payton sat down. Payton sat down across from him, studying him. He had made no effort to make her feel welcome these last few months, and she suspected that he resented her taking Scully's place, even if it was only temporary. She took out the files that she'd been working on earlier, and slid them across the desk to him. The pile of sunflower seeds that he'd started on, scattered, and he gave her an

annoyed look. She glared back at him. " You know Mulder, I am no happier about working with you than you are about working with me, but I suggest for the duration of this investigation that we try to get along. I realize that you'd rather be working with your wife-Ã" " This has nothing to do with my wife. I don't need a partner, Skinner knows that. Yet, I've been assigned a partner anyway, I don't like being baby sat, and I certainly don't need to retrain an Agent.Ã" " Mulder, has anyone ever told you that you are not the center of the universe?"She stood up to leave and he stopped her. " Wait, Margaret, Look, I'm sorry, you're right, I've been really hard on you. It's what you said about Agent Elliott, I feel responsible for her condition, and I don't want anyone else getting hurt because of me. I didn't mean to make you feel like you aren't a competent Agent, in fact, Scully has spoken very highly of the both of you. Friends?"He held his hand out to her, and she took it. " Fine, for now. So, tell me about this Syndicate, is this like drugs, or gun running?"She sat down again, and he turned on the overhead projector. " Neither of those, tell me something Payton, do you believe in the existence of extraterrestrial life forms?Ã" " Is that a trick question?Ã" Mulder gave Payton a quick overview of the last six years of encounters with the Syndicate, and she listened attentively. Mulder was impressed, she didn't laugh, or snicker, she just listened carefully, occasionally taking notes. " So, what do you think?Ã" Payton bit her lip, and thought for a moment before answering. " If Agent Scully believes you, then I can believe you. I respect her tremendously, she's the best professor I've ever had, and like I said if she believes you, then-Ã" " Well, thank you for giving me some credibility based on my own merits."He smiled at her for the first time since she'd been assigned to the X-Files division. " You'd better get going to retrieve the tapes. Meet me back here in 40 minutes, you'll need to show them the ID to get into that box, I'll show you how to sign M.F. Luder on the card."He wrote it down for her. " Will you find out how Elliott is doing for me?"She grabbed her coat and headed for the door. " I will, just remember to sign M.F. Luder to the security card at the safe deposit box. Not Mary, just M.Ã" " Trust me."She looked at him over her shoulder, and walked out. Basement Offices J.Edgar Hoover Building 7:00 P.M. " You're late."Mulder had his back to the door, and he turned as it closed softly behind Agent Payton. " Traffic. What's on these tapes? There's a DAT, a video cassette, some audio cassettes, and what appears to be transcripts of some kind.Ã" " I'm not sure what the other stuff is, but the DAT is a copy of a tape I received a few years ago explaining the existence of extraterrestrial life on this planet. It is encoded, but Elliott had someone working on that . That may be what the transcripts are. I'm going to go home and work on this stuff, Thanks for retrieving it.Ã" " Do you need any help?"Agent Payton set her briefcase down on his desk, and noticed that the files that she'd given him earlier had not been touched. " No, I have some other things to take care of before I get started on these, you may as well go on home for the evening. I'll see you in the morning."He began to collect his things, and put his jacket on. " Agent Mulder, you told me to gather passenger lists for Northwest Airlines, earlier, did you have a chance to look at them, or did you not need them?Ã" " They're part of this. Elliott told me that Krycek was back here in Washington, but she wouldn't tell me any of Krycek's aliases. I just thought I'd have a look for myself. She did let it slip that she'd been on Northwest Airlines, I'm guessing that he followed her.Ã" " Why wouldn't she tell you if she was working for you?Ã" " She said that she didn't want me taking off after Krycek without all of the information, but I suspect that she is protecting him." " Somehow, I

doubt that. He left her for a woman named -"Her phone rang, and she answered it. " Payton?" Mulder turned to leave, and Payton hung up the phone. " Is everything okay?"He saw her wipe her eyes, and he turned to face her. " That was Skinner- Elliott went into cardiac arrest, they were able to resuscitate her, but they think that it's only a matter of hours.Ã" Mulder put his hand on her shoulder. " I'm sorry. Can I give you a ride to the hospital? I'm on my way there now.Ã" " I thought that you didn't want me down there.Ã" " I've changed my mind. Maybe you should contact her family.Ã" " Her adoptive parents died two years ago in an earthquake. My brother and I are her only family. She and my brother are dating. " Come on Agent, I'll give you a ride." McNeil Memorial Hospital Room 821 Agents Mulder and Payton entered the hospital room quietly, and were stunned by the beeping machinery, the rhythmic suck-swoosh of the oxygen compressor. Agent Elliott lay unconscious and bandaged, Assistant Director Skinner stood next to her. He nodded to them as Payton crossed the room, and stood over her partner. Mulder stood by the door, not wanting to intrude. He felt responsible for Elliott being here, and he could hardly look at her. Skinner approached Mulder, and signaled him to go out into the hall. " Yes sir?"Mulder pulled the door closed behind him. " It doesn't look good. We're about to lose another agent, and that bastard is still free. I got word from Agent Takai that Krycek was spotted in Arlington. He was under surveillance for a while, but he must have spotted the tail. He's gone again. I just want you and Scully to be extra careful while you're on leave. Maybe get someone to drive by the house a few times a day, or perhaps you could stay with Maggie Scully for a few days-Ã" " I'm not going on leave sir. Not until we find that black lunged son of a bitch. He's responsible for that young woman in there-Ã" " Mulder, Scully is going to need your protection. Besides, we have four other agents working on this. You need the time off with your family, and you need to get clear of this so that you are fresh, and objective.Ã" " With all due respect sir, I asked her to get involved with this case and now she's dying- I can't help feeling responsible.Ã" " Mulder, Agent Elliott was well aware of the risks that were involved. She knew the kind of people that we were up against. The fact that she still took this assignment is a testament to the kind of agent that she was-- is. You should be proud that you are responsible for training such a fine agent.Ã" " Sir,"Mulder paused as Agent Payton exited the room. " I'm going to the airport to pick up my brother. He wanted to be here, in case-" Skinner placed his hand on her shoulder, and she took a deep breath. " Agent Mulder is going on leave for a few weeks, I assured him that we would look after Elliott. Things will be fine here Mulder, go on downstairs.Ã" " He's right Mulder, we'll take care of her. You go on, and if we need you, we'll call you at home.Ã" " Can I ask, Sir, who will you be assigning the case to?Ã" " Spender."Skinner placed his hands on his hips, and turned around. He knew Mulder would lose his cool. " Spender? Sir-Ã" " Agent Mulder, Agent Spender has proven himself to be a worthy agent, if he weren't he would have been out of here. I'm giving him this assignment."Skinner saw Payton give Mulder a puzzled glance, and Mulder moved closer to Skinner. " Sir, would you do something for me? Would you have him tailed I don't trust him, especially after the fire.Ã" " No way, Mulder-"Skinner interrupted. " Sir, I can keep an eye on Spender if you don't trust him. I would report back to Agent Mulder. If he's clean, he's clean, but if we've got a leak, we need to plug it as soon as possible. Don't let anyone else end up here, Sir." " Fine. Just don't let him find out about it all right?" Mulder nodded, and stepped away from them. He pushed the down button for the elevator, and went to Scully's room. Room 524 "

Mulder?"Scully was dressing the twins, while Maggie and Lily packed up the teddy bears, flowers, and Dana's bag. " I'm early, I know, Let's go home. I have a lot to tell you.~" One Month later Mulder residence Tuesday, 12:41 P.M. Scully turned the volume up on the baby monitor, and sat down on the couch next to Mulder. " Are they sleeping finally?" " Yes, it took forever. I think they inherited your insomnia, among other things."She laid across his lap, and he stroked her cheek with his hand. " What's going on in that head of yours, Mulder?~" " I'm just thinking about this case. Smoky comes and goes like an Apparition, He's obviously lying low after shooting Elliott.~" " How is Spender handling the case? Have you heard anything from Payton?"She sat up and he rubbed his eyes. " So far, there hasn't been anything out of the ordinary. I really wanted to get a look at those files before I left. Maybe I can convince Payton to bring them over here for a while."Mulder stood up and walked over to the phone. " If I can get her over here, will you help me?~" " Yes, it would be nice to get back to something that doesn't involve a diaper.~" " Hey Payton, it's Mulder, are you alone in the office?~" " No, mom, it's no bother. Your place? Sure, I'll be there in twenty minutes.~" Mulder knew that Spender must be nearby. " Can you bring Elliott's files? I'd like to get started.~" " Sure thing. See you soon."She hung up. Spender was hovering over her like a vulture and she hated it. He reminded her of a weasel. He was completely irrational about his dislike of Mulder. She couldn't even bring up his name without Spender flipping out. She wondered how much longer he would be with the F.B.I. with that attitude. He was also pulling rank on her every five minutes. She'd love to find a way to stick it to him, she thought. Payton collected the stack of papers that she'd been reading, and began walking towards the door. " Where do you think you're going? It's the middle of the day?~" " Lunch. My mom is expecting me."She stepped closer to the door, and he blocked her path. " Why are you taking those with you?" She desperately wanted to tell him to go to hell, this was her partner's work, she had a right to do anything that she wanted, but she chose to play his power game. " I'm going to have these papers run through a program for decoding. I know some government decoders that do this stuff for fun. They also have higher security clearances than the people on staff here today. I'd like to keep whatever this stuff is under wraps for now. I mean no one is even supposed to know that Elliott is still alive.You haven't told anyone have you?~" Spender stepped out of Payton's path. " No, I haven't told anyone. I saw an address, in Ontario that I wanted to check out that's all." " Write it down. I don't know how long I'll be.~" " Yeah, I'll do that. You received a package by the way. From South America. You running dope maybe?" " Go to hell Spender, I used to live there. They're photos from our last trip back." She slammed the door behind her as she stormed out of the office. Mulder residence One Hour Later " Hi Gryphon, is Mulder available?"Payton stepped into the foyer and took her jacket off. Gryphon hung it up next to the mirror, and led her into Mulder's office. " Fox, Agent Payton is here to see you. Can I get you something to drink Madame? Coffee, tea perhaps?" " No, I'm fine, thank you." Gryphon stepped out of the office, and closed the door behind him. Payton sat down across from Mulder, and unlatched her briefcase. " Sorry it took me so long. The Weasel pulled a stall tactic. I'm really starting to question what that kid is up to.~" " Yeah, I don't trust him. So what's up with the files? Did you find anything as far as names, dates, places?~" " There's a Canadian address-~" " Let me see it."Mulder took it from her, and wrote it down on a legal pad that was in front of him. " Elliott was working on getting Samantha's whereabouts for me. She said that she thought

that it might be Canada. " I'm starting to worry, Elliott sneaked into this group through Krycek, got close to the leader, and was able to steal all of this information in just over a year? Wouldn't you think that this Strughold guy would be extremely paranoid? Maybe this was a test to see if she could be trusted. " Scully came in with her glasses on, and her hair pulled back into a ponytail. Payton had never seen her so down to earth. Scully looked happy. " I thought you could use my help. " Agent Scully, it's good to see you, you look great. " Thanks, Payton. Any progress? " Brainstorming. " Mulder spit out a shell, and stared intently at his computer screen. He punched a few keys, and adjusted his glasses. " I've got an idea, something I should have done a while ago. " He stood up to leave, and pulled his glasses off. " Scully, I'm going to check on something will the two of you continue going over this stuff? Call me if you find anything. " Mulder, I'd feel better if you took your gun. You have a nasty habit of running into trouble. " I won't be in any trouble. It's the equivalent of going to the library, besides, you're distracting me. " He kissed the tip of her nose, and walked out. Mulder thought about the conversation that he'd had with Elliott. She had given him the key to her house. Maybe there was information there that would be of better use to him. He got into their white Saab, and adjusted the seat. " Scully's little legs. " He muttered to himself. It was a ten minute drive to Agent Elliott's house from his. He spent the drive thinking about what Elliott had told him about the security code, and the location of the key to the fire proof box stashed in her fireplace. He pulled into the driveway, and shut the car down. He could see the mail piling up in the box, and he gathered it up, and took it inside. He shunted the alarm panel, and closed the door behind him. Elliott's house was much smaller than his own. But it was just as nice. He saw that they had similar furnishing styles, and the antiques that she had would have made Scully pout. Mulder noted that there were four fireplaces on the first floor, and thought back to which she had mentioned. It had to be the one in the kitchen. Mulder had stored this information with a picture of old bread ovens. Mulder knelt on the stone hearth, and reached up inside the chimney. He could feel a ledge, and a cold metal strong box. He pulled it down, and inserted the tiny key that was underneath the ficus that she had told him about. He sat down at her table, and opened the box. There was a letter on top from Agent Elliott. " Mulder, if you're reading this, something must have happened to me. I wasn't sure how to handle this situation, and I don't trust anyone but you, and Payton. The information that I left for you at the Watergate was fake. I thought that if you were caught, or if Payton wasn't able to retrieve it- Well, I knew that you would come here. I made a point of telling you how to find this because of that. I also figured that you might be going on leave soon with Scully being so close to her due date. The important thing is that you are here now. The fake packet includes addresses, phone records, e-mails, telegrams, and video surveillance. There is also a blank DAT. The real one is in here. I also included a dossier on everyone even remotely involved with this case. I did one on myself just so you would know who you were working with. I came across, some interesting information, Skinner ordered Security to save all of the videotapes made the night of the fire. The one that destroyed your office. I went back to see if anyone entered or exited. I didn't find anything, but I did find that Agent Spender had a conversation with the man we call Morley. Do they know each other? I did a dossier on your house keeper Gunter " Gryphon " Kleina, and I discovered that he has a younger brother Peter Kleina- They were separated shortly after their mother died of lung cancer. That was in Germany. You'll see the year attached. I checked his phone records,

and occasionally, he receives phone calls from the address that I left for you in the fake packet. I'm hoping that if Spender is connected in any way, that that address will shake him. I'm not sure what to make of your housekeeper. Maybe you know about the phone calls from his brother, but I found it curious that it's the same neighborhood as the one Samantha lives in. It may even be the same house, I haven't gotten her exact address yet. I'm hoping that I can get into Strughold's phone book this weekend. (He thinks that I am in Prague.) Mulder thought about the few times that he'd seen Gryphon rushing off the phone when he'd enter the room. He'd never mentioned having a brother. Maybe Gryphon hadn't told his family that he was managing a household. He found his place, and began reading again. I know that you are wondering why I refused to tell you anything about Alex, He and I have some unsettled business, I didn't want you going after him until I had a chance to tell him about our son. Payton doesn't know either. I took a leave of absence after I found out I was pregnant, and my adoptive parents were killed shortly afterwards. I gave him up for adoption. I knew that I couldn't raise him alone, not with our careers. Just give me a few more days to get through to him. I hope that the information that I took helps you to find your sister, and to bring the men that took her to justice. I only hope that Alexi had nothing to do with it. Mulder folded the letter, and placed it back in the box. So, Agent Elliott had a child with Alex Krycek. He probably wouldn't have asked her to take this assignment if he'd known about her continued emotional connection to him. He sorted through the box and found DAT's, video tapes, and transcripts from a wire tap that she'd placed on Strughold's phone. Most of the transcribed calls were to places in Europe, however, he noted that many calls were placed to a number in Ontario. Mulder locked the box, reset the alarm system, and left. He did not notice that Alex Krycek had been watching him the entire time. Mulder picked up the phone and dialed his home number. Scully picked up on the third ring. " Everything all right Scully? What took you so long?"God, I sound worried he thought. " Everything's fine Mulder, Mom took the twins to the mall with her and Lily. Why? Are you okay? Where are you?Ã" " I'm in the car, listen I've got some things to discuss with you, and with Payton, is she still there?Ã" " Yes, we're working on the transcripts, looking up area codes, matching them with addresses. Most of them are out of service.Ã" " They're fakes. The information was planted by Elliott in case someone other than me got ahold of the information packet. It was a pre- caution since you were about to go on leave." " She's as paranoid as you then."Scully winked at Payton hoping that her barb would lighten Mulder's mood. " Scully, she had reason to be. And so do we. She did a dossier on Gryphon- I don't want you to get mad, it turned out to be a good idea, I think. Gryphon has told us that he doesn't have any family. Yet, Elliott was able to find a brother. Peter Kleina. He and Gryphon were sent to an orphanage shortly after their mother died of lung cancer. Does that story ring any bells with you?Ã" " No, should it?"She began drumming her pencil on the pad of paper that she'd been writing on. Mulder could be so cryptic sometimes. " Remember the night we had that discussion with the guys about Morley's origins? They weren't certain the information was correct, but how certain can we ever be of anything until there is definitive evidence. Gryphon said that he was born in Russia, I'm starting to wonder. He has a German name-Gunter. Scully what was that click did you hear that?Ã" " Mulder, don't you think that you're going way out on a limb this time? You said it yourself, Gryphon is just a lonely old groundskeeper who lost his son, and his life. Don't turn this into anything more than that. Elliott may have been wrong, or maybe there isn't any connection to

Morley at all. Let it go. I won't be looking under every bed, and into every closet in my house for signs of Morley." She was amused, but becoming increasingly annoyed with Mulder's suspicion of everyone they came across. She'd discovered that living with a paranoiac had its drawbacks. "Scully, just do me a favor, if he starts acting strange at all, you and Payton get the hell out of there." "Mulder, aren't you coming back here?" "No, I have something to check up on. I'm flying to Toronto to check out that address. I have a feeling that Elliott located Samantha." "Do you think that you'll be back tonight? Or should I go to Mom's she asked me to come over." "Go to Mom's, I'll be back first thing in the morning." Payton signaled to Scully, and Scully nodded. "Mulder, Payton needs to talk to you, I love you, be careful." "I promise Scully, I'll be extra careful. I love you baby, I'll see you tomorrow." Scully handed the phone to Payton and picked up the papers that they'd been reading. No use continuing if these were fakes. "Mulder, keep your phone on, I'll need to get in touch with you if any of this info pans out." "I'll let Scully explain it, but we won't be needing any of the information in that packet. The only thing that isn't fake is the address in Ontario. I think that it's Samantha's." "Spender was checking out that address as I was leaving." "Then I've got to get to Ontario before he does. I don't want him to get up there and freak her out before I can talk to her. I'll be in touch." He hung up the phone, and turned south onto the entrance to the expressway. Cassandra Spender's Residence 3:00 P.M. Jeffrey Spender turned the key in the lock and let himself in to his mother's home. It had been empty for many months, and it smelled of decay; dusty, and unused. He hadn't had the courage to dispose of his mother's things after her disappearance, and now he was glad that he had not. He thought back to how he felt when he saw the address in the packet that Agent Elliott had put together. Seeing those numbers sent a chill through him, as he realized that it looked to be the same address that was on letters that his mother had received over the years from the man claiming to be his father. He had to be certain. Spender climbed the stairs, listening for the familiar creaks, and groans of each step, as he ascended. They rang hollow in the abandoned house. He felt like an intruder, as though the house were cursing his presence, given the condition of his relationship with his mother at the end. Spender caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror at the top of the stairs. He turned from left to right- looking for a resemblance to the man they were seeking for the murder of a federal Agent. Well, the attempted murder he thought. Spender thought back to his conversation with Alex Krycek yesterday. He probably shouldn't have mentioned that an Agent was nearly killed by the river, But what was the harm? he thought. Besides, Krycek was an all right guy, a former agent even. And Spender had felt his own importance for the first time. He was the head of the X-Files division. He had dethroned "Spooky" Mulder, and he intended for it to stay that way. A little bragging couldn't hurt. He sat down at his mother's vanity. There was a drawer on the right that she kept her keepsakes in. He pulled out a stack of letters, bound by a purple silk ribbon. He pushed the ribbon aside, and confirmed that the addresses were the exact same. He shook his head. A score like this one could make his career. He could almost hear the accolades. "That's the Agent who brought down Morley. They say he was his father, but that didn't stop him. What a stand up guy. Loves his job. In line for a promotion? Why yes, that young man is on the fast track." Spender pulled out his cellular phone and booked himself on a flight to Toronto, Ontario. McNeil Memorial Hospital 3:16 P.M. Jack Payton picked up the plastic water pitcher and went out to the hall way for ice. He had been with Carson nearly everyday

since she was brought in. He was confident that she would recover, and hoped that he would be able to talk her out of her career choice. The nurse on duty smiled at him, he was quite popular among the nurses, they felt his dedication was sweet, almost old fashioned. At least that is what he had overheard. He pushed his sandy blonde hair off of his forehead, and thought about getting a bite to eat after he dropped off Carson's water. He filled the styro foam lined pitcher, and closed the lid. Maybe he would even spend the night at his sister's house. Now that Carson was out of the woods. The pneumonia had been treated, and she was on the mend. He stepped towards the door, and peered inside first, he didn't want to interrupt if she was with her boss. Jack felt his jaw drop, as he looked inside. He instinctively pulled back, and walked towards the pay phones just on the other side of the nurses station. Jack quickly shoved 35 cents into the pay phone, and dialed Margaret's cell phone. " Payton?" " Margaret, it's me, Alex Krycek is standing over Carson. What should I do?" " What? Don't go in there, I'll get someone he doesn't know down there to tail him. I'm on my way." Payton hung up the phone and began putting her briefcase together. " Scully, I've got to go, Krycek is in Elliott's room." " Do you want me to come down?" " No, but call John Gabriel and have him get down to the hospital- if Gabriel isn't available, get Anne Takai.- I'm going down there. You might want to call Skinner- We're going to have to move her." Payton rushed out, and Scully could hear her tires squealing out of the driveway. Scully called Gabriel, he, and Skinner would be at the hospital in ten minutes. She dearly missed this part of their work. Being a mom was wonderful, it was as challenging as it was rewarding, but she couldn't help feeling like she was a has been. No wonder Mulder's been moody, she thought. She closed the file in front of her and got up to stretch. The kids were gone, the house was clean, and Mulder was gone for the night. She decided to write in her journal. Gryphon knocked on the door, and entered carrying a tray of tea and cookies. " I didn't realize that Agent Payton had left. I thought perhaps you would enjoy some tea." " Thank you, Gryphon that would be nice. He poured her a cup, and handed it to her. She sat down and stirred sugar into it. She switched on her computer, and sat back in her chair. She could smell the tea- Almonds- slightly burnt almonds she thought. Mulder joked that her would never drink almond tea. She brought the cup to her lips- She could almost hear Mulder's voice in her head. "Cyanide smells like bitter almonds, and I can't bring myself to drink it.' She held the cup, looking down into it's dark swirling tempest. What if? If Mulder's right-I could die, if he's wrong, I could embarrass a dear friend. Gryphon would understand-this was the world that she and Mulder inhabited. Mistrust was how you stayed alive. Scully sank into her chair. She decided to skip the tea. Mulder would have her head if she ignored her gut feeling. She could hear Gryphon approaching the doorway, and decided to test him. If he wasn't up to something, he would assume that she was sleeping. If he was up to something, she would have the element of surprise on her side. She laid her head down on the desk, and stilled her breathing. " Sorry, I forgot to- Oh- Dana?" He stood over her and looked to see if she was breathing. Dana felt his hands grip her ponytail. She heard the drawer next to her slide open, and felt her hair grow taut as he cut off her hair. She felt panic rising within her. He leaned across the desk, and dialed the phone. " It is finished. She is dead. Where is my son?" Minutes later, Dana heard him close the door to the den as he left. She had heard him making arrangements with someone to dispose of her body. She lifted her head, and picked up the telephone handset. She dialed Mulder's cell phone number. He answered on the first ring. " Mulder." Scully

whispered into the phone, terrified that Gryphon would hear her talking. " Mulder, you were right about Gryphon. He tried to poison me. He thinks that I'm dead. I'm in the den, my gun is in my overcoat in the foyer. What the hell should I do? If I let him think that I'm dead, we stand a better chance of finding whoever ordered him to do this.~" " Where's Payton?~" " She's at the hospital. Krycek showed up in Elliott's room. Mulder, I can't stay on the line- I think he's coming back."She hung up the phone quietly, and laid her head back on the desk. Gryphon entered the room, and took the stack of files in front of Dana. He gathered all of the papers, and placed them in the fireplace. He lit a match and set them on fire. Wispy curls of burnt paper floated up into the chimney as he watched them burn. They would be here soon. And he would finally get his son back. McNeil Memorial Hospital Room 821 3:25 P.M. Krycek took Carson's hand, and kissed it. " I should be going. Your boyfriend will be back soon, and I don't want to have to explain what I'm doing here.~" " Alexi, there's something that I need to tell you. I should have told you a long time ago, but things were awful- I need to tell you about our son. We had a little boy. I named him Nicholai Alexandrovich. I figured you would be happy that I chose to give him a Russian patronymic. He's living with a family outside of Vladivostok. His parents are professors at the university.~" " I- I never would have thought- I'm sorry that you were alone. You know that I care about you, and I would have helped you if I could- I-~" " It's okay. You should go, they're looking for you. I won't tell them anything. I know that you didn't have anything to do with the crimes that they're investigating.~" He stood up to leave, and she noticed that he didn't answer her. " You shouldn't be so trusting- I never lied to you about what I do. But I wasn't completely honest. I do have more to do with this than you think. A lot more.~" " Then you owe me something Alex. I put my life, in jeopardy for you. You owe me at least one last favor. Where is Morley? That son of a bitch is going to pay for shooting me.~" " I don't know. The man you call Morley stays hidden. But I can tell you that Strughold knows that there was a leak. I'm going into hiding because he is assassinating all of his subordinates. The man you know as The Elder, he is next. Several people that you came to know over the last year are dead. Morley's name is on the list. As were yours and mine. That is why I came to warn you. I still care- Get yourself out of the country-while everyone thinks you're dead." " Did Strughold purposely place misinformation-~" " Why were you spying?~" " No, you know that I joined the Syndicate to be near you. Because I believe in you.~" " It's possible. I have to go, There is a meeting in Toronto-I think it was called by Morley.~" " Alex, what if that meeting in Toronto is a trap? What if he's luring you and others there to remove you all at once. A Convergence-~" " Then I had better be careful."He slipped out of the room quietly, and disappeared. Payton ran in to find Elliott alone, and staring out the window. Dulles Airport Terminal 3 3: 40 P.M. Mulder paced back and forth in the terminal. His thoughts raced. If he returned to his home to rescue Scully, he might be too late. It was a forty minute drive- But if he didn't Scully would be at Gryphon's mercy. He dialed Payton's cell phone. " Payton." " Payton, it's Mulder, Scully's in trouble. I need you to get back to my house-~" " I'm at the hospital, Krycek was just here. I'm waiting for word from the tail.~" " Have Skinner wait. Gryphon tried to poison Scully- He thinks that she's dead, and I'm sure a ~"clean up crew' is on it's way. Scully's gun is in her trench coat. it's hanging in the foyer.~" She rushed to the elevator, and headed for the parking garage. " Do you want me to disable him, or kill him?~" " Disable if you have to, we're still trying to figure out who he's working for. Please hurry. Call me when she's safe, and

bring her to Dulles." Mulder hung up the phone. Scully could easily have handled Gryphon before the pregnancy. But with her recovering from surgery, Mulder didn't want to take any chances. He hoped that Payton could get to her in time. Mulder dialed Maggie Scully's cell phone, and asked her to keep the children until she heard from him or Dana. He sighed with relief knowing that their children were safe.

Mulder Residence 3:43 P.M. Scully was near panic-her mother would be returning with the children any moment now. She couldn't risk opening her eyes to see what Gryphon was doing, but she heard him trashing the den. Gryphon shoved her chair, sending her sprawling onto the floor. The change in position allowed her a quick glance at him. She hardly recognized him. His orderly white hair was disheveled. He was nearly frothing at the mouth as he pushed everything off of her desk onto the floor. The telephone struck her in the center of her back, and she tried desperately to stifle a cry. The doorbell rang, and he stormed towards the foyer. Scully climbed out the window, and laid in the bushes. Payton's BMW was parked in the driveway. Mulder must have sent her. " Payton!" She whispered loudly, Margaret turned, and saw Scully crouched in the bushes. The door flew open, and Gryphon smiled. " Hi, Gryphon, I left my trench coat here by mistake, can I just grab it? It won't take a moment." She stepped into the doorway, and stepped past Gryphon. He hesitated for a moment, and let her pass. " Madame, that is Dana's trench coat.Ã" " No, no, this one is mine. Unless mine is in the den-" She began heading for the den. He turned towards the den, and back to her. " You would know your own trench coat, right? Please, Mrs. Mulder is sleeping, I need to make sure that she gets her rest.Ã" " I understand, I'm sorry." She pulled her badge out of the pocket of Scully's jacket. " See, my jacket. Thanks." She backed out of the door, and rushed towards her car. Scully was crouched down in the back seat. " Don't say anything yet. He's probably watching. Thank you very much for coming back to get me.Ã" Payton backed the car out of the driveway, and sped towards Dulles airport. " Mulder wants you to call him. What sent that guy over the edge?Ã" " I'm not sure, but Mulder said that he heard a click while we were on the phone. I have to wonder if Gryphon was listening." She took her phone out of her trench coat pocket and dialed Mulder's. " Yeah, Scully is that you?" " Mulder, we're on our way. Please call Mom, tell her not to take the babies back to the house. Gryphon was so violent Mulder. He cut my hair, he took my ponytail. What the hell is going on?Ã" " I already called Mom, she's going to your Aunt Barbara's. Maybe he took your hair to prove to his superiors that he really killed you.Ã" Payton noticed a white van passing her on the left. She watched it turn onto Dana's street, and leaned back over the seat. " The Clean Up Crew just went by. You can sit up now.Ã" Dana sat up, and looked in the rearview mirror. She noticed how much shorter her hair was. She parted it with her fingers, and pushed a strand behind her ear. " You still there, Scully?Ã" " Yes Mulder. You're going to hate my hair. Not much left to brush.Ã" She knew that he would relax if she lightened the conversation a bit. She could feel him smiling on the other end of the phone. " We'll come up with something. Scully, I'm sorry. I brought Gryphon into our lives, and he-Ã" " Don't do this to yourself Mulder. You had no way of knowing that Gryphon was working for the Syndicate. Mulder, when he was standing over me, he said " It is finished, she is dead, now where is my son? I thought that Jake was killed on that mountain.Ã" " He disappeared, yes. His body was never recovered. He had been buried under the avalanche. No body was recovered the following spring, so everyone assumed that he had been washed down into the river. I guess this means that Jake was abducted, and Gryphon has known about it all this time. This lends

credence to my theory that Smoky is the long lost Peter Kleina.Ã" London, Ontario Canada 4:20 P.M. Strughold lit his cigar, and scratched his chin thoughtfully. So many plans were falling into place all at once. He held his satisfaction at bay. Although the often troublesome Dana Scully was no longer a factor, her husband, Fox Mulder, would take up a new cause. He would want revenge for his wife's death. Mulder would have to be dealt with swiftly, a man in that emotional state has nothing to lose, he thought. The phone began to ring deep within the house, and a young man answered it. The phone was brought to Mr. Strughold, and he took it with a raised brow. There must have been trouble, he wasn't expecting any calls. " Yes.Ã" " Several things to report. Scully is alive. Spender has booked himself on a flight to Toronto, departing in half an hour. Our Ã"Smoking Gun' was informed of the deaths by The Whisperer-He has called a meeting between himself, Krycek, and various other " free-lancers."Also in Toronto. It seems that he is unaware of Agent Spender's impending visit.Ã" " Where is Agent Mulder?Ã" " I don't know, sir.Ã" " Find out. Get Mulder and Scully to join their little party in Toronto. It would be horrible if there was an explosion and they were all killed." Strughold sipped at his brandy, and smiled bitterly. " Make sure that their meeting place is loaded with enough explosives to leave a crater. I want them all dead.Ã" " I heard from the clean up crew that Gryphon Kleina is asking for his son. What should we do about him?" " Eliminate him too."He hung up the phone, satisfied that his problems were soon coming to an end. McNeil Memorial Hospital Room 821 4:22 P.M. Agent Elliott hung up the phone, as Assistant Director Skinner entered the room. " So, Agent Elliott, what would Alex Krycek risk life and limb to tell you?"Skinner paced at the foot of her bed, and waited for an answer. " It was of a private nature Sir."She could not bring herself to look at him. She could feel the accusations forming in his mind. No one understood. She didn't understand herself. " Am I to infer that you have a private relationship with him? Or is this a part of your cover story? How did he find out that you were alive? How did he find out that you were here?Ã" " I don't know, Sir. I can only assume that someone working on the case told him. As for what Alex and I talked about, I would rather not say. It did not concern this investigation." " Agent, I'm going through an awful lot of trouble to protect you. Innocent lives are on the line. The lives of your fellow agents. Now, I suggest you tell me what you discussed with Alex Krycek, or I will be forced to begin a disciplinary action to be placed in your file, do you understand the gravity of the situation, Agent Elliott?Ã" " Yes Sir, and I still have nothing to say regarding the matter.Ã" " Then consider yourself suspended from all duties, including administrative.Ã" " But sir, I was going back to work tomorrow.Ã" " That's unfortunate. Agent Elliott, for whatever reason you feel the need to protect him, let me assure you that it is unnecessary. He can take care of himself. That is how he has eluded capture all of these years.Ã" " I don't even know what he is wanted for. I don't think that there is a real reason.Ã" " Try the murder of William Mulder for starters.Ã" " He killed Mulder's father Sir?Ã" " Among other things.Ã" He watched the disbelief fade from her face. He watched her struggle with herself to understand, and finally, he saw resignation. " He is headed for Toronto. There was a meeting called between the assassins of the Syndicate, and the man we call Morley.Ã" " That's where Spender is headed.Ã" " Sir, you've got to stop him, it's a trap. It's what the assassins call a Convergence. You bring a group of enemies together and let them kill each other, and if that doesn't work, there's usually a mass killing.Ã" Skinner grabbed his jacket, and stormed out. Elliott pulled her I.V. tube out, and began to

dress. She took her gun from the drawer, and left. Dulles International Airport 4:20 P.M. Scully ran to Mulder's side, and he pulled her into his arms. " Hey Doc- Look at your hair-Ã" " I know,"She ran her fingers through the wisps in the back. " I'm just glad you're okay- You are okay aren't you?Ã" " Yes Mulder, I'm fine. Payton went to get us tickets and something to drink."They sat down in the waiting area. " Mom's keeping the kids so don't worry about them, okay?Ã" " I'm not worried about the kids, I'm just wondering if Gryphon had anything to do with the kidnapping. And where did he get the cyanide from? Who is he working for?Ã" " I don't know, I guess it's something that we'll have to look into.Ã" Mulder put his arm around Scully protectively, and she laid her head on his shoulder. " Have you thought about what you're going to say to Samantha?Ã" " Yeah, I have, and it all sounds artificial. I can't think of the words to make her understand how much we've missed her. I guess I'll just wing it. You know me.Ã" " Yes, Mulder, I do."She looked up at him, and he kissed the tip of her nose. Payton approached, and sat down next to them. " Scully, the flight is sold out. They've booked us on a later flight, but I wanted to check with you first.Ã" Mulder took Scully's hand. " I don't want to do this without you, Dana.Ã" " I shouldn't be there Mulder, you need space to say what you feel, Margaret and I can take the later flight, I'll meet you at a hotel. You get us rooms, and when we get to the airport, I'll call you.Ã" An announcer called for his flight to begin boarding. Mulder had used his F.B.I. credentials to allow himself to board the plane with the first class passengers. " That's your flight Mulder, go on. We'll be along later. Right when you need me."Scully ran her hand down Mulder's arm, and Payton excused herself. " I will need you. I'm terrified that she'll blow me off like she did last time."He stooped down to pick up his bag, and Scully took his hands in his. " I love you, Fox. Please take care of yourself.Ã" " You do the same. You stay here at the airport, don't tell anyone who you are, and please, don't make any phone calls-I'm sure they know you're not dead, but we've got to find out what's going on. I've got a strong feeling that this all has to do with this address. If this is Samantha's home, then maybe she will lead me to Morley." " But you said yourself that she thinks of him as her father. Would she willingly give you the means to expose, and arrest him?Ã" " I have to try. And if she doesn't cooperate, then maybe I can glean the necessary information from her home. Phone numbers written on memo boards, photographs in scenic places, anything that will lead me to him.Ã" I hate leaving you alone like this- maybe I should take a later flight-Ã" " No, Mulder, I'm not alone, Payton is here with me, and besides, you have to get to Samantha before Spender does. Go."She stroked his cheek with her palm, and he kissed it. " I love you back."He turned, and went down the tube leading to a 737. Scully felt her heart sink, and she sat down hard in the blue chair behind her. Payton came up and offered her a diet soda. Scully took it, smiling gratefully. " You two."Payton began, " You remind me of my parents. Not that I'm calling you guys old or anything, you just get along well together.Ã" " We didn't always."Scully sipped her soda, and scanned the area. There aren't any suspicious looking people lingering around. For now, she thought. " Are you familiar with a song called Synchronicity?Ã" " Yes, I love that song. Why? Is that what we remind you of?Ã" " Yeah. Completely opposite, living in balance. It's what we aspire to."She turned the page of the magazine that she was skimming. " We? Who's we?"Scully became intrigued. " Us single agents at the Bureau. You and Mulder have it all. Great house, beautiful children, exciting careers, you're lucky.Ã" " I know."Scully was lost in thought for a moment, and then turned to address Payton directly. " I didn't mean

for that to sound as though I were gloating, today has been a reminder of what Mulder and I have, and how fragile our world is. I could easily have finished that tea without a second thought. I've become so lulled into passivity- Don't let me get you down. Marriage and kids are great, but if you love being an agent, be an agent, and be the best damned agent at the Bureau. Don't ever stop doing that, for yourself.Ã" " Do you regret giving up your full time career to work part time?Ã" " Regret isn't the right word. I only wish this was a different world. One where I could continue to pursue justice, but I wouldn't end up murdered, and neither would my husband. It's paradoxical isn't it? I'd like to be in danger but not suffer the consequences. It's the thrill that I miss the most. Even while I was pretending to be dead, strewn across the floor of my den, I was alive. It was the most alive that I have felt since I gave birth to the twins. A different kind of alive. My life was on the line, and I loved it. I miss that Margaret.Ã" " Would Mulder have any problem with you returning to work?Ã" " No, he's the one begging me to come back to the X-Files. I haven't made up my mind yet. There's a lot to do and very little time to do it. Not to mention that he has great help. He doesn't realize how little he needs me.Ã" Payton's phone rang, and she answered it quickly. " Payton.Ã" Scully looked around again, and noted that the waiting area had cleared out. The next flight would depart in two hours. She thought about getting a bite to eat, and a snack for the flight. " That was Skinner, he said that Spender is walking into a trap. What was the address that Mulder had?Ã" " It's 22 something Spadina Ave. I know it's a main thoroughfare. What's wrong?Ã" " Mulder is walking into the same trap that Spender is walking into."They both stood up, and could see the jet pulling out onto the taxi way. " Do you think we should try to call him?Ã" Scully stepped towards the counter to find an agent, but they were assisting other passengers. " No, you can't use your phone on the airplane. Where was Skinner calling from?"Scully looked around to make sure that no one was watching them. " The expressway. He's on his way. He didn't know that I was here. Skinner said that he tried Spender's phone but he got his voice mail.Ã" " We need to come up with a plan. Okay. We need to get in touch with either Mulder or Spender-or we need to get to Toronto before Mulder.Ã" " Without Spender knowing that Mulder was checking up on him.Ã" " I don't care what Spender thinks at this point. My only concern is Mulder. I'd feel more comfortable if I had some supplies with me, a first aid kit, another clip for my gun, Mulder is a magnet for trouble. I can't be seen around town. Whatever I need, I'll have to try and buy it here.Ã" " Skinner can help. He will at least be able to supply you with a first aid kit.Ã" " Let's go find out if there are any flights departing for Toronto or the surrounding areas any sooner.Ã" " Better yet, I can fly us there. My dad is retired Air Force, he has a Baron that we keep at the municipal airport. He made us learn to fly as soon as we could reach the pedals. We could get to Toronto shortly after Mulder." " We should stop for ammo, maybe some gear, in case we don't get there in time, and you and I have to go storming in there.Ã" " Are you up for this Dana?" " I don't have a choice."She turned and left the terminal. Spadina Ave. Toronto Ontario 5:15 P.M. Jeffrey Spender pulled out of the parking spot that he was in, and continued North on Spadina towards Casa Loma. He could see it ahead of him as it loomed over Spadina Avenue like a watchman. The map showed that the address that he was looking for was at the top of the hill, behind Casa Loma, in the area of Forest Hill. Spender looked around him. He hadn't been to Toronto since he was a small boy, and then he'd only been interested in the sail boats on Lake Ontario. So much had changed. He passed a subway station on his right, and

continued up the hill. He began to watch more closely as he passed Casa Loma on his right. The homes became grander, and he noticed that the area was much quieter. Spender spotted the house numbers and pulled over onto the side of the road. He parked the car, and got out. His mother had told him very little about his father while he was growing up, and he had many questions. The first one being how did he end up being wanted for murder. He took a deep breath as he knocked on the wooden door. He peeked inside the leaded glass windows of the door frame, and could see the foyer. There were two yellow rain slickers hanging on a coat rack. They looked like they belonged to children. Grandchildren maybe? He thought. Beneath the slickers lay a large golden retriever. He hardly stirred as Jeffrey pounded on the door again. This time, a movement caught Spender's eye. He could see a woman approaching. A brown haired woman who was drying her hands on a towel. He watched her push a stray curl behind her ear as she opened the door tentatively. " May I help you?"The woman asked him. Spender was stunned into silence. Could this woman be his sister? Or maybe she was Morley's wife, some men liked younger wives. Maybe she was a cleaning woman, he thought. " Uh- I'm Agent Jeffrey Spender with the F.B.I."He fumbled for his badge, and was certain that she'd caught a glimpse of his gun as he fished for the wallet. " I came to ask a certain gentleman who lives here a few questions. Is there anyone else here in the home with you Ms.-Ã" " Mrs. Harcourt. Samantha Harcourt. My husband is away on business, may I ask what this is regarding?"She closed the door a bit, unsure of what to make of the unexpected visitor. " I really need to speak with Mr. Harcourt. Do you know when to expect him?"Spender's gut told him that she was lying, and he knew that he had to press further. " He's on assignment. He could be back within the month, but I'm assuming that he'll be gone until September.Ã" " Assignment? What line of work is Mr. Harcourt in? If I may ask?Ã" " He's a photographer for a wildlife magazine here in Ontario. Why is that important? And if you're with the F.B.I. wouldn't you already know that?Ã" She was becoming suspicious, and began reaching for the gun that was hidden in a box within the door frame. Spender was certain that there was a misunderstanding. He decided to show her the surveillance photograph of Morley. It was a photo of Morley with Fox Mulder's mother. The only photo that the F.B.I. had in their possession. " May I show you a photograph, Mrs. Harcourt? Can you tell me, is the man in this photograph your husband?"He was not prepared for her reaction to the photo. Samantha fell to her knees, and caressed the woman's picture. "Mrs. Harcourt, are you okay?Ã" " M-M-Mom-- My Mom--"She began to wail, and Spender stepped inside of the house. " Can I get you some water?" " Mom-Mom. My Mom--"Samantha began to rock on her knees as she sobbed. Spender took off his jacket, and knelt beside Samantha. He took her into his arms, and held her. So this is Samantha Mulder, he thought. No aliens, No serial killers, just a woman crying over her lost identity. Maryland Municipal Airport 6:00 P.M. " Scully, the line man is gone. You can sit up now.Ã" " Being dead is a pain. I should have bought a wig instead of all of those snacks."Dana patted the back pack beside her. It was filled with bottled water, energy bars, freeze dried food, and a first aid kit. " Why did you buy all of that stuff anyway? I can see the water, and the first aid kit, but the food, and carb bars- what's the deal?Ã" " Mulder and I have a history of getting stuck without food and water. He rushes off without thinking. We've eaten some pretty weird stuff.Ã" Scully threw her back pack into the backseat of the airplane, and let Margaret climb in first. She climbed in afterwards, and pulled the door closed. " I can't believe that you fly, that's great."Dana checked out the panel in front of her. She recognized the altimeter, and the

artificial horizon. Margaret looked completely at ease as she plugged in her head sets, and pulled out a spiral bound check list. " Put these on, and when you want to speak, go ahead and speak, just don't push this button. This keeps us in touch with Ground, and Tower.Ã" Scully watched her preflight the airplane, and she felt a rush of excitement as Payton started first the left, and then the right engine. She thought about Lily, Saren, and Jake, and hoped that Lily understood why she and Mulder had to leave. Payton called Ground control, and received permission to taxi out to the runway where she completed one last check of the aircraft before receiving permission from the Tower to take off. After pulling out onto the strip, Payton increased the power. They lifted off the ground with a surge, and Scully said a quiet prayer that they would reach Mulder in time.

Pearson International Airport 6:35 P.M. Mulder threw his bag into the back seat of his rental car, and thought of Scully. He wished that she was climbing into the seat beside him. Lamenting that he always drove. He could see her staring at her maps, and reaching for the dials to find suitable music on the radio. He pulled out his cell phone, and pushed 1. There was no answer. Mulder put his phone away, and pulled out of the rental agency parking lot. Harcourt Residence 6:35 P.M. " I'm sorry, Agent Spender. I needed some time. The man in the photograph is my father. The woman is my mother. Did my brother Fox send you here? Is that why you came?Ã" " No, I'm looking for your father. He's wanted for questioning. Do you know how I can reach him?Ã" " He is bringing my sons home from a football game. I expect them any minute now.Ã" " Do you mind if I wait? I've traveled a great distance to speak with him." " You won't have much longer to wait. He just pulled into the drive." Samantha stood up, and went to the door. It opened, and two brown haired boys ran in. They were followed by a tall man that flicked his cigarette butt into the street. " Mom, you should have seen the game. The Jay-hawks were awesome." The taller of the two boys hung his sweater on the coat rack, and noticed Spender standing in the living room. Morley stepped into the house, and closed the door quickly. " Samantha, whose car is that?Ã" " It's mine." Spender stepped forward, and Morley's jaw dropped. " What are you doing here? You fool ! You've led Mulder right to my doorstep.Ã" " Mulder? What does Mulder have to do with this?Ã" " Boys, go upstairs please, I'll be up in a moment.Ã" " Thanks gram pa." They ran upstairs, and Samantha closed the French doors separating the hall way from the living room. " You are constantly under estimating Mulder. And you have undone what took me over twenty years to conceal. Get out of here right now.Ã" " I have a warrant for your arrest.Ã" " You have no power here." " Father, what is this about?" Samantha stepped to his side, and he took her hand. " Go upstairs with the boys Samantha, get your things together, you're going to have to stay in a hotel tonight.Ã" " I want some answers. You say that you're my father, how is that possible? Why did you kill Agent Elliott? What are you involved with?" Spender felt himself growing impatient with Morley's stall tactics. " Father, what is he saying?Ã" " Samantha please go upstairs. I will handle this." Samantha slid the doors open, and ran up the stairs. " How dare you come here, I gave you everything that you have now. You wanted the X-Files, and now you have them. How could you come here and upset my daughter." " I am an Agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, I have an obligation to bring you to justice. Whether you are my father or not.Ã" " Jeffrey, son, we will talk about this, but now is not the time. You have compromised my situation here. If Mulder has followed you-Ã" " Why are you calling Samantha Mulder your daughter? What is going on here?Ã" " I will explain everything to you some other time. Go back to Washington. You have no business here." He

pulled out his weapon, and nudged Spender towards the door. Spender bit his lip defiantly, but began walking. " I want to know what the hell is going on here. I'm not finished with you.Ã" " Meet me at the Park Plaza Hotel on Avenue Road at 10:00 tonight, and I promise that I will tell you everything that you want to know. Give me a chance to get them settled in, and I'll meet you in the lobby.Ã" " All right. But by 10:15, I'm coming after you. Don't be late.Ã" Spender got into his car, and drove around the block. He parked behind a large truck, and watched the door. Moments later, Morley exited the house, and climbed into a black Mercedes. Spender pulled out into traffic to follow him, and was followed by Mulder who pulled up in time to see Morley exiting the house. Somewhere over New York 7:15 P.M. Payton leveled the aircraft, and punched the three letter identifier for the Toronto Island Airport into the navigation unit. Scully was sitting beside her reading the charts for Southern Ontario. " I didn't think that it was possible, but I think that I've found something that makes even less sense than a road map."She refolded the chart, and handed it to Payton. " You just have to know what you're looking for. Kind of like the X-Files. Outsiders would scoff at our research methods.Ã" Scully raised her eyebrow in surprise. " Where have you been? They've been scoffing at Mulder since he dusted those files off. They stuck him in the basement because they thought that they could discourage him, but they didn't realize that when left to his own devices, Mulder finds a way. I admire that about him. His tenacity.Ã" Payton turned from the instrument panel to Scully. " Mulder and I clash over a lot of things, and it's usually his stubbornness. I don't know how you worked with him for so long. I wanted to kill him after two hours of that incessant cracking. Those sunflower seeds-Ã" " Oh that. Mulder needs to space out while he's thinking. I think that it's a response to stress. You will come to appreciate his humor, and I think that you will find reasons to forgive his shortcomings.Ã"Scully stared out the window. " You are completely biased.Ã" " You think so?"They laughed, and Scully reached for a bottle of water. " Are we there yet?Ã" " Oh gosh, we used to bug my dad with that for hours on end. We've still got a ways to go, but we'll get there soon. As soon as we land, call him, maybe we can catch him if he stops to get a room first.Ã" " No, I think that Mulder will be too anxious to get a room first. He's been looking for her for so long."Scully thought for a moment. " If this is a trap, why is this taking place at a private residence?Ã" " Skinner said it was something that the assassins call a Convergence. Someone gathers all of the key players in a given power struggle and they usually end up killing each other. It's usually arranged by someone who does not attend the meeting.Ã" " But no one knows that Mulder is on his way to Toronto, unless he is being followed.Ã" " That may work to our advantage, if we can get to Mulder in time, we can stop him from walking into the biggest battle that he's ever seen, and they'll never even know that he was there.Ã" Oshawa, Ontario 8 P.M. Mulder took a shell out of his mouth, and put it in the ashtray. He was still following Spender, who was following Morley. Mulder was having a hard time concentrating. He kept thinking about the moment that he decided to pursue Morley rather than going up to the house, and knocking on the door. He could see her coming to the door, her wavy brown hair pulled back into a pony tail, or maybe loose and flowing. He saw her taking groceries up those stairs, raking leaves from the maple tree in the front yard. He could see himself going into the doorway, and embracing his sister. His thoughts drifted to thoughts of Scully collapsed on the floor of their den. He could picture Gryphon as he twisted Scully's hair in his fist, and cut her beautiful hair off. He tasted blood in his mouth, and realized that

he'd bitten through his lip in anger. He tried to think of Scully as he had last seen her. Her hair, though a few inches shorter, no less beautiful. Her cheeks flushed from running through the airport to the safety of his arms. He could see it in her eyes every time she looked at him. She loved him. That was all that he needed to get through this. He'd had to choose between Samantha and Scully again, and he'd chosen Scully. He had chosen to pursue the engineer of all of their nightmares. He thought of Jake and Saren. How they would never have been born if it weren't for the same man. Morley pulled into the parking lot of an abandoned hotel. There were dumpsters on either side of it, and Mulder could see piles of concrete rubble and plaster piled inside. Mulder shut his car off, and parked his car a distance down the road. He took his binoculars out, and saw that Spender had parked his car a little farther down the road. Morley got out of his car, and went inside. Mulder checked his watch, it was 8:07. He sat back to watch, and realized that Agent Spender was getting out of his car. Mulder undid his seat belt, and caught up with Spender. " Mulder, what the hell are you doing here? " " You can't just walk in there. You're going to get yourself killed. " " I asked you a question. " " I came to see my sister. I saw Morley leaving her house, and I followed you, and him here. " Mulder saw headlights approaching, and shoved Jeffrey down to the ground beside his car. " Stay down. " The car passed, and parked next to the black Mercedes. " I've seen your sister. " Mulder hung his head and nodded. After all that he'd been through, two of his colleagues had seen her, spoken to her, and he was still waiting. How many others interacted with Samantha on a daily basis? He wondered. " She has two sons Mulder. I didn't catch their names. She's married. Her name is Harcourt now. I didn't know who she was, I came up here looking for Morley. I showed her the picture that we have- " " From Quonochontuag? The summer house? My Mother is in that photograph- What did she say? What was her reaction? " " She was shocked. She fell to her knees crying. " Spender saw Mulder's jaw clench. " Mulder, she asked about you. She asked if you were okay. I told her that you have a family, and that you were still looking for her. She was happy to hear that you were doing so well. Why don't you go and see her. I'll take care of bringing Morley in. " " You'll get yourself killed. These people are not playing games Agent Spender. These people are responsible for countless murders including the attempted murder of several federal agents. You will just be one more. We need to catch Morley in a position where he is vulnerable, not surrounded by his cohorts. " Mulder's phone rang, and he reached into his pocket to answer it. Spender took off, and ran towards the entrance to the hotel. " Mulder. " " Mulder, it's me. Don't go to that house if you haven't already. " She breathed a sigh of relief when she heard his voice. " I followed Spender and Morley to an abandoned hotel in Oshawa. What's going on? " " Skinner said that it's a trap. Elliott told him that the assassins were called together for some sort of meeting, and that Krycek was under the impression that it was a trap. Have you seen Krycek yet? " " No I haven't. Scully, Spender just ran into the hotel to arrest Morley. I could use some back up. " " You've got it Mulder. How do I get there? " Mulder gave Scully directions, while Payton spoke with the ferry men. The Fountains Hotel 8:13 P.M. Alex Krycek surveyed the area. He saw 'The Smoking Man' ahead of him speaking to "The Whisperer" and "The Doctor". Both of the women were former F.B.I. agents. The F.B.I. was a fertile training ground for some of their best assassins, he thought. He stepped into the dim banquet room, and did a quick assessment. It had two exits. The door way that he was approaching, and a door leading to another banquet room. There was a row of windows along the side wall, facing what used to be a

fairly busy street. The area was closed off now, as the demolition crews tore down the surrounding buildings, and the hotel itself. Krycek heard "The Whisperer" telling Morley about her latest kill. A scientist at a Guatemalan University. They had blamed the kill on a local revolutionary group. Morley nodded in his direction, and he nodded in response. Krycek did not consider Morley a friend, however he respected his work. He looked to his right, and was amazed to see the man he knew as "The Wind". Krycek had never seen this man in person, and could not believe that the reedy man in front of him was known for his skill, and aggression. He did understand how he could come and go as he pleased. No one would ever suspect that the 130 pound man could kill with his bare hands. "The Doctor" began to speak, but Krycek kept his attention focused on the circle of people that had gathered in an abandoned hotel in the middle of nowhere. Something that she had said caught Morley's attention, and Krycek turned his attention to him, as he began to speak. "I personally do not feel that it is wise for us to sit around and wait for Strughold to kill us off one by one. I plan to do something about it. And I plan to do it immediately." The others agreed, and they began formulating a plan. They knew that Strughold would be arriving in Canada later that evening, and they planned to finish him at the airport. Krycek shifted uncomfortably. The air was laden with tension. The room was filled with people who didn't like each other, and would sooner kill everyone of them than admit that he or she was wrong. Alex began backing away from the group. He reached behind him, and clicked the safety off of the gun that he had tucked in the small of his back. Morley took out a cigarette, and became aware of Krycek's movement. "Are you going somewhere? Mr. Krycek." "I don't like this. This feels like a set up, and I don't plan to stick around for it." Morley took out his gun and raised it to Krycek's face. "The Wind" stepped between Krycek and Morley. "I don't like the looks of this either. None of us trusts the other, and with good reason. There is a good chance that Strughold knows about this meeting, and what better chance to wipe us out with one swift blow than to-" "The Doctor" held up her hand to quiet them. "There's someone coming." Mulder slid into position beside Spender outside of the banquet room. They had been listening to the conversation going on within the room for the last ten minutes. The room became quiet, and they drew their weapons. "Can you see what's going on?" Spender craned over Mulder's shoulder trying to see inside the room. Mulder tried to elbow him back. "Something's up. They've gotten quiet. Be on the watch for-" Mulder turned as he heard a sharp metallic click from behind him. Spender had his gun trained on Mulder. "That's far enough. Don't turn around any more." "Spender what are you doing?" "Walk." He waved his gun in the direction of the room, and Mulder began walking forward. "You're going to pay for this Spender." Morley turned around to see Jeffrey Spender shoving Mulder into the room, and he felt himself smiling. "Well, well. Look who has decided to join our illustrious group." "The Doctor" trained her gun on Mulder, and Spender stepped behind him. "I'm a little under dressed, I hope you don't mind." Mulder felt Spender nudging the gun into his back, as he watched Morley pull a drag on his cigarette. "You become more and more troublesome as the days pass. I believe that we had a deal. Or have you forgotten the terms of our agreement?" "There was never an agreement. And I didn't come here looking for you. I came for Samantha. I don't care about your meeting, and you know that I don't have the authority to arrest any of you, so you may as well let me leave." "Mulder, Mulder, Mulder. Your stupidity is only exceeded by your arrogance." Morley dropped his cigarette, and approached Mulder. Mulder could feel the tension building in the room as the

assassins watched Morley intimidate him. There was a moment's pause that felt like forever, and then Morley spoke. " Son, I'd like for you to handle this on your own. There is something that you must experience first, and that is the taking of a human life for the sheer joy of it." Spender bit his lip. He wasn't sure what his father was alluding to, but he thought that maybe he was asking him to kill Mulder. He didn't know if he was quite prepared for that. He gripped his weapon, and he could feel Mulder's eyes upon him. All of the eyes in the room were upon him. Spender would have to prove himself to this group if he was to be allowed to continue breathing. Jeffrey saw it as mere survival, Mulder's life or his own. Spender slid the bolt into place on his gun, feeling a surge of power that he had never known before. He had never fired upon another human being, and he wasn't sure of how he would feel, but feeling the power welling up within him, and knowing that he was all that was standing between Mulder and eternity made him feel like a god. He looked to his father for guidance and received a nod which made him know that whatever action he chose, he would receive absolution. Spender pressed the cold steel barrel of his gun to Mulder's head, and he smiled as Mulder winced beneath the pressure. His father had told him about the joy of making a man suffer, and now he was experiencing that joy. " Spender, you had better kill me, because if you don't, I am going to spend the rest of my days trying to kill you." Mulder braced himself for the inevitable concussion of a steel slug slamming into his brain. He could almost see himself crumpling to the ground, blood pouring from his skull, his life ebbing from him, life force drifting into the ether, and suddenly darkness. His thoughts turned to Scully and his children. God, if you exist, and you're listening please don't let Scully suffer. Please let her understand that I died trying to protect her and our babies. He prayed silently to himself, as Spender relished the moment. Spender squeezed the trigger slowly, unsure of how much force he would have to expend to end someone's life. There was a voice at the door, and he lowered his gun. " Peter? What is going on here? I was told that you wanted to meet me. Is Jake here? " Gryphon Kleina stood in the doorway of the banquet room, Morley turned to face the doorway. " Gryphon, what are you doing here? I didn't call for you." " I was told that you wanted to see me, that Jake was here, Please I need to see my son." " Gryphon, Jake has been dead for over twenty years." Krycek turned to "The Wind," and nodded. " I'm leaving. This is definitely a set up." He ran towards the staircase, and felt himself propelled forward, as a gust of air, like a large burning fist pummeled his back. The crash of an explosion deafened him, and he heard lathe and plaster tearing itself away from the building. Alex raised his head a few minutes later and found himself buried beneath chunks of the staircase, coils of rebar stood out like multiple Medusas. His left arm was pinned beneath a steel I-beam, and he smiled to himself at the grim irony. He undid the stays on his prosthetic arm, and pulled himself from the rubble. There was no way anyone could have survived the blast that he had just lived through, he thought. He wiped sweat from his brow, and was dismayed to find his hand bloody. His forehead was split open, and was gushing blood. He tore his useless left sleeve from it's stitching, and tied it across his brow, holding the cuff in his mouth as he pulled it taut. As the smoke began to clear, he surveyed the scene before him. The formerly six story building was nearly leveled, as each floor had collapsed onto the floor beneath. He saw a leg rising from the broken stairs next to him, and concluded that the assassin known to him as 'The Wind', was dead. He wondered where Mulder, Morley and Spender had ended up, but knew that they were probably dead as well. Feeling like a rat swimming from a sunken

ship, Krycek looked back once more, as he ran towards the cars lining the roadway. The shattered windows gaped at him like crystalline spider webs. Krycek approached the blue Sedan just over the rise in the hill. It was probably Mulder's, he thought. The keys were in it, and he pulled the door open. Broken glass littered the front seat, and he swept the rock candy bits away. He climbed in, and started the engine, thankful that rental cars were nearly always automatics. Krycek headed back down the main road, checking the rearview mirror. There was no sign of anyone following him. He turned left, and disappeared into the shadows. Mulder pushed at the steel fire door that laid across his chest with all of his might. He had avoided the bullet meant for him, and all he could think about now was survival. Scully's voice echoed in his head. "Hang on Mulder, I'll be there." He could feel his arms straining as he tried to lift it. Morley was sprawled out above him. He couldn't tell if he was alive or dead. Spender leaned his bloody face over Mulder, and walked away. Mulder could hear him speaking, and thought that he was going for help. After a moment, Mulder realized that Spender was in shock and that he was babbling incoherently. So, Morley was Spender's father. That would be of some interest to Skinner. If he ever saw Skinner again, his brain amended. Moments Earlier Scully and Payton pulled over, and checked their map again. "We should have turned right back down the road a bit. I'll turn the car around." Scully checked the mirrors as she turned the car around. Mulder was going to need all the help that they could offer considering the OPP had refused to become involved in what they considered a private meeting between persons possessing no criminal records in the Province of Ontario. "What the hell was that?" Payton rolled down the window, and tried to listen more closely. "Sounded like an explosion. God, Mulder please be okay." Scully slammed her foot down on the gas pedal, as Payton refastened her seat belt. Mulder could almost feel the blood draining from his leaden arms as he pushed at the door. His fingers ached, and his throat burned from the smoke billowing around his head in a thick cloud of plaster dust. He rested his head on the bricks beneath him. Sweat beaded on his brow, and rolled down into his hair. He tried to raise his head, but could not move his neck more than a few centimeters. He tried to cough, and felt his raw throat seize for a series of coughs. Spender was still wandering about in the aftermath, dripping blood, and talking to no one in particular. Mulder tried to call out to him, but he was too far gone to notice. "Spender, help me." Jeffrey didn't answer, he continued staring forward, and sat down on a pile of bricks in what used to be a courtyard. Mulder dropped the door back down onto his chest. His arms were jelly like from straining, and he felt his lungs desperately trying to expand under the pressure. Scully stared at the remains of the smoldering hotel as they approached it. Thick, choking clouds of black smoke poured from small fires that lit up the night sky. She undid her seat belt, and jumped out of the car, panicking. Her first thoughts were of Mulder, as she took out her flashlight. Payton rushed to her side, taking out her own flashlight. "What the hell happened?" "There was an explosion. I think that there might be several more, do you hear that rumbling?" She pointed to the west, and Payton noticed the ground shaking beneath the piles. Scully began walking faster, calling out to Mulder, hoping that he wasn't in the explosion. Her heart was in her throat, and she feared the worst. "Mulder!" She listened for any signs of life, praying that Mulder would answer her. She called out to him again, but heard nothing. Payton spotted Spender sitting on the edge of a brick courtyard, and approached him with her hands out. "Jeffrey, It's Margaret, Margaret Payton, can you hear me?" Spender turned his head in her direction as if to

acknowledge her, but said nothing. " Spender, Where is Mulder?" Scully shined her flashlight over Spender's face, and saw that his head was bleeding. She pressed her fingers to his throat to check his pulse, and then checked his pupils. " Payton, he's in shock. I need you to get the blankets and my first aid kit out of the car. Spender, can you hear me? Can you respond?" She waited for him to answer, but he stared off into space. Payton ran back with a silvery material, and draped it around Spender's shoulders. Scully got to work disinfecting and bandaging his head wound. He must have been struck in the head by something, she concluded. " Payton, I've got to find Mulder, you keep an eye on him. Keep him here, and call for an ambulance. Yell if he gets worse." Scully climbed over the side of what used to be a bar, and began calling for Mulder. Her heart sank as she called to him, but there was no response. She searched the crags for limbs, or signs of life. She heard nothing but the crackling of burning wood, and paper, as the last of the hotel blazed around them. Mulder lay beneath the door, suffocating in the tiny crevice. He faded in and out of consciousness, and could barely feel his left leg. His right leg was completely numb, and he thought that it was probably broken. He tried to focus, to hear if anyone was looking for him, but he could only hear the sound of rocks falling above him, as he lay crushed, and exhausted. He thought of Lily, how she was probably just climbing into bed. How Saren and Jake were nestled in their bassinets at Maggie's. He shivered in the cold darkness, as the sweat that ran into his hair began to cool. Mulder could only think that he was going to die in this place, broken, and twisted, leaving Scully behind, and breaking the promise that he'd made to her to keep himself safe. He felt a tear escape his eye, and it was followed by another. 'God, please don't let me die in this place. Please don't let her find me like this. Scully, I'm sorry, baby. I'm so sorry.' He sobbed quietly in the dark, as another rock fell on top of him. Scully wiped her eyes. So far, she'd seen at least two bodies, neither of them were Mulder's, but would the next one be? She didn't feel like she could continue knowing that there was a good possibility that he was dead. She sank down onto four steps that had remained intact through the blast. She put her head into her hands, and began to cry. Payton saw Scully giving up, and walked over to where she was sitting. " Scully, I can do this for a while if you want to take a break, here, here's some water, just breathe. If I find anything, I'll call you. The ambulance is on it's way. Hang in there all right? We don't know that he's even here." " No, he's here. I know it. I can feel him. I just don't know where. I don't know where to start, and if he's unconscious, he can't help me. I should have called him sooner. Maybe I could have stopped him from following Spender in the-" " Scully that's it! Call him! At least his phone ringing will tell us where to look for him. " " Oh God, I wasn't even thinking. She pushed '1' on her speed dial, and the phone rang. She took the phone away from her ear, and began walking to the right. Payton went to the left. Dana had gone a few meters when she heard the shrill chirping of the cellular phone that Mulder kept with him. She waved to Payton, dropped to her knees beside him, and began pulling at the debris pinning him under the steel door. Payton raced over, and helped her drag the concrete away, and they flung the door off of him. Scully knelt down by his face, and stroked his cheek, realizing that tears were running down hers. " Mulder, thank God, Are you in any pain? Payton, get my first aid kit and blankets." " Smoky, and Spender--- Spender's his son." He coughed blood, and Scully brushed his hair from his forehead. She looked over his body, his right leg was twisted at an odd angle, and she knew that it was broken. He was probably close to shock, she thought. " Payton, hurry

Mulder's going into shock." Margaret ran around to the trunk of their car, and withdrew a silvery fabric, and a blanket. She ran towards Scully, and dropped beside her with the first aid kit. " You all right, Mulder? Can I get you some water?" " No! No water, he's about to go into shock. He's clammy and pale and his pulse is too rapid. I need to get him to a hospital, he's coughing blood, and his leg is fractured pretty badly. I need to splint that leg, can you think of anything? Oh wait, the tire iron from our car, get that, and also, check that green Sedan, it's bound to be Mulder's or Spender's. I'll look for a board to put his leg onto." Payton rushed back to their car, and released the trunk lever. The tire iron lay in the trunk, along with another first aid kit. She pulled them both out, and went to the green Sedan. She reached in through the shattered window, and released the trunk. After retrieving the tire iron from it, she returned to Mulder's side. Scully kneeled beside Mulder comforting him, and caressing his head. He had lost consciousness, and she had taken off her sweatshirt, and lifted his leg onto a splintered two by four, and began bracing his leg with the tire irons. " Here's my jacket, Scully. The ambulance and rescue teams are almost here, I'm going to go with Spender, since officially, I'm his partner. Keep me updated on Mulder's condition if we get separated." " I will." Scully stared at Mulder, and stroked his head. " I called Skinner. He's just arrived. Agent Elliott left the hospital this afternoon, and hasn't been seen since. Skinner said that he suspects that she's meeting up with Krycek, and the two of them are going to disappear. I never knew that she was still involved with Alex." " None of us knew, not even Mulder. " I'm worried about Carson. What does this make her? Has she left the Bureau? Will I be assigned to arrest her soon? I don't know. It's just disconcerting. I don't know who to trust, I don't know how to talk to people anymore. I can't live like this." " I'm starting to think that I can't continue like this either." Margaret looked at Scully cradling Mulder's head, and realized that she was no longer talking about the Bureau. She watched the ambulance service pull down the roadway, and waved to them, while Scully sat silently, clutching Mulder to her breast. Payton sat with Mulder, as the EMT's discussed his condition with Scully. He was suffering from a broken leg, broken ribs, a punctured lung, and a concussion. An airlift was dispatched, and Payton watched as first Mulder, then Scully was assisted into the helicopter. She felt hands around her own waist, as she was hoisted up into a waiting ambulance. Rescue crews were beginning to pull their equipment out, and Spender pressed his face to the glass as they drove away. Toronto General Hospital 10:30 P.M. Mulder opened his eyes as the nurses around him began disinfecting his leg, and prepping him for surgery to repair his left lung. His neck remained in a collar, and he could not turn his head. He called out to Scully, and was instantly reassured when she took his hand. " I didn't think I'd ever see you again, Scully." " You're not getting rid of me that easily." She gave him a tiny kiss on the lips, and a weak smile. The rasp in his chest seemed to be getting worse, she thought, or maybe it's just quieter here. Mulder could see that she was exhausted, and tried to smile back at her. " You came all this way, and didn't bring any sunflower seeds?" " You're incorrigible. I have seeds in my bag, you just worry about getting better." Mulder's doctor signaled to Scully that they would be taking him in to surgery, Scully nodded, and squeezed Mulder's hand. " Baby, I'll be waiting for you when you wake up, all right. You sleep now." "Scully--Dana, I love you." She felt her throat constrict as she nodded to him. " I love you too, Fox Mulder." She began to walk away. " Doc, wait, I want to tell you something." " No death bed proclamations, you're going to be all right, I won't accept anything else." " No, nothing like that, when I

do get out of here, will you marry me? I mean a real wedding this time, flowers in your hair, cocktail weenies, the whole nine yards." " Yes, I will." She wiped her eyes, and squeezed his hand three times. " I know what that means, Scully. Samantha and I used to do that too. I meant to tell you that before." Mulder smiled at her as the orderlies wheeled him into the operating room. Skinner put his arm around her shoulder as she stood outside the door. " Agent Scully, any word on Mulder?" " Well, Sir, the lavage came back positive, so they-" " Lavage, that's like a test for internal bleeding, right?" " Yes, Sir, he has internal bleeding, a punctured lung, some broken ribs, his right leg is broken, he has a concussion. They are optimistic, but that's what they always say." " Can I get you a cup of coffee, or can I call your mother for you?" " Coffee would be great. I should call my mom, I'm sure that my daughter would like to speak to me." " She's asleep by now I'm sure." " Oh my, what time is it?" " It's nearly eleven." " I'll call my mom in the morning. Sir, thank you for coming it really means a lot to me, and Mulder." " It's the least that I could do. I feel like I let Mulder down. He should have had more information going into this, but I had no idea that Spender was Morley's son." " How did you find out?" " Agent Payton. Spender is in the Psych ward being evaluated. She told me that he has had some sort of breakdown." Agent Elliott came towards them in the hall way, and Skinner drew his gun. " Sir, what are you doing?" " Friend or Foe, Agent Elliott?" " Why have you turned on me? What have I done?" " Maybe the information that you planted for Mulder was a little too convenient. Like maybe your boss wanted Mulder to die in that explosion, and you had no problem selling him out." " Sir, Mulder asked me to find his sister. I did that. I didn't sell him out. I wouldn't do something like that, Agent Mulder and Agent Scully are my friends, Sir, lower your weapon, please." Scully stepped towards Elliott, between her and Skinner's gun. " My husband might be dying, if it's because of you, so help me-" " Scully, I didn't sell Mulder out. You know me. I was assigned to get within this organization and give Mulder the information that he needed. Now, you're looking at me as though I am the enemy? Maybe I did my job a little too well. No one trusts me now." " Why the meeting with Krycek this morning?" Skinner challenged. " It was personal. I've had limited contact with Krycek outside of my assignment, Sir, I was shot trying to protect the information that I obtained for Mulder, would I really allow myself to be killed to make sure that he was set up? I'm not the one that sold Mulder out, it was Spender." Skinner shook his head in disbelief. " Oh this is rich, Agent. You expect me to believe that? Where did you come by this information?" " Alex Krycek." " Oh I see, so that makes it reliable. Get the hell out of here." " No, Sir, wait." Scully grabbed Skinner's arm, and lowered his gun. " Mulder said that Spender was Morley's son. Maybe he did expose Mulder." " Do you believe her Agent Scully?" " Yes, sir, I do. Agent Elliott has always been trustworthy, and I trust Mulder's judgment. If he had lost faith in her, he wouldn't have pursued the information that she provided." Elliott looked at her watch, and breathed a sigh of relief as Skinner put his gun back in it's holster. " I came here because I know where Strughold is. I'm going after him to make that son of a bitch pay for what he's done to me. I'm offering you the opportunity to face him before I kill him." Skinner looked at her intently. " You realize that if you do kill this Strughold, you will lose your badge, and face murder charges." " Sir, don't you see? It doesn't matter. I will never be trusted again by either the Bureau, or any of my fellow agents. I will always be seen as a double agent. I know that , and I am willing to end this knowing that at the very least, my friends, and my son will be safe."

Scully looked at Skinner as he tugged at his tie. " Son? You have a child? With Alex no doubt. Now I see why you are protecting him." Skinner threw his tie on the chair behind him, and sank down into it. " Carson, I can't leave Mulder in the condition that he is in. If something were to happen, I wouldn't be able to live with myself." Payton came down the hall way, and was stunned to see Agent Elliott. "What the hell are you doing here? Shouldn't you be with Alexi?" " Payton, I was just doing my job. This had nothing to do with him." " Did your job include killing fellow Agents?" Skinner stepped forward to separate the two women. " That's enough Payton. The situation points to evidence that Mulder was sold out by Agent Spender." Elliott pulled Scully off to the side. " Scully, I understand, and I'm sorry that Mulder is hurt. If you change your mind, I'll be at the Bristol Place Hotel until 2 a.m. Then I'm going after Strughold. I will try to find out as much about the Syndicate as I can, but I'm not making any promises. There is a good chance that I won't be coming back." " Carson, I appreciate the offer, but Mulder needs me here now. Good luck, and if I don't ever see you again, thank you." She hugged her. " That's from me and Mulder. God Speed." Elliott turned and saw Payton glaring at her. " Margaret, whatever you believe about me, I can live with, but will you please tell Jack that I was just doing my job, and that I loved him. Take care." " Just go, Carson. I can't believe that I trusted you. I won't make that mistake again. I certainly won't let my brother make the same mistake." Elliott pushed the elevator button, and stared at the numbers above her until the doors slid open, then closed. " You really don't trust her anymore do you?" Scully watched Payton as she sat down next to Skinner. " No, Scully, I don't, and you would be wise not to trust her either." Scully sat down on the other side of Skinner, and began to wait. Toronto General Hospital 45 Minutes Later. Scully had gone into the phone booth to call her mother privately. Maggie was shocked to hear the extent of Mulder's injuries, and said that she would begin praying for him. Skinner brought two cups of coffee back from the cafeteria, and he set one down next to Payton. " Any word on Mulder?" " No, Sir, we're still waiting. Scully is talking to her Mom. Sir, I think that you should probably go see if she's all right." " No, She needs time to deal with this. I'm sure that she's worried sick. Their babies are only a month old. Lily has only been with them for a short time, I'm sure that she's busy praying." " Sir, what's going to happen to Agent Spender?" " If he ever recovers his mental faculties, he will be dismissed from the Bureau. I suspect that he will probably be this way for a long time." " Do they know what caused the breakdown?" " No, the Psychologist on duty couldn't really tell me anything. Maybe seeing all of those bodies flipped him out. I don't think that Spender has seen anything worse than a paper cut up until now." A surgeon came out of the operating room, and took off his mask, and goggles. He looked at Payton, and began walking towards her. " Mrs. Mulder?" " No, she's on the phone with her mother, is there news?" " I'd rather wait for Mrs. Mulder to return." Skinner took Margaret's hand. " I'll go get her. You stay here in case I miss her." Skinner walked down the hall to the bank of pay phones lining the wall. He hated the smell of hospitals, and he'd seen too many of them in the last few months. He counted the black and white tiles leading up to Scully. It was the only way that he could stop his face from giving his emotions away. He feared for Mulder's life, and swallowed past a lump developing in his throat. Scully saw him approaching, and hung up the phone. "Sir, is there news? Is Mulder out of surgery, I'd like to see him. I need to be there when he wakes up." " The doctor is waiting for you to return before he'll tell us anything. Whatever happens Dana, I'm here for

you. You can count on that." " Thank you, Sir, but I'm sure that I'll be fine. My Mom is bringing everyone to Toronto so we can be together while Mulder recovers." " Well that's good news." He took her hand, and they walked back to the lounge where Dr. Farber and Agent Payton were standing. " Hello, Doctor, I'm Mrs. Mulder, can I see my husband now?" " Mrs. Mulder, perhaps you would be more comfortable if we sat down in my office." Scully felt panic surge through her. She searched the doctor's face for emotions, but could not see through the tears that welled up as she spoke. " What is going on? Is something wrong with my husband?" The doctor lowered his head and Scully had her answer. " How could this have happened? I don't understand, he- he-" She began to hyperventilate, and Skinner put his arms around her. " Dr. Farber, what the hell happened in there?" Skinner felt rage building within him, and clenched his teeth to control it. " He stopped breathing. We had just repaired the puncture in his lung, and stopped the bleeding from his right kidney. His leg was set, and we wrapped his ribs- I don't know how to explain it, he just stopped breathing. Mrs. Mulder, I am terribly sorry. We did everything that we could to save him, but he didn't respond to any of our attempts." " Stopped breathing from what? No! No! I won't accept that" She broke free from Skinner's grasp and rushed towards the door of the surgical unit. " Mrs. Mulder, I assure you that we did everything that we could." Payton turned to Skinner and leaned her head on his chest. Scully entered the white tiled room, the machines were silent, and she gasped when she saw Mulder laid out on the table. The blood had been wiped away from his face, but the floor was covered with sponges, and gauze. She walked towards him with her hand to her mouth to stifle the screams that threatened to break free. Mulder's eyes were closed, and his face was slack. People were so wrong about the dead looking peaceful, or asleep. Even in sleep the face kept some animation. Mulder's expression was blank, and she wondered if he knew what had happened to him. She wiped her eyes again and again, but could not stop the flow of tears. She stepped closer to Mulder's side, and leaned over him. She pressed her lips to his, and remained. His lips were cool to the touch, and she knew that it was true. " Mulder, you promised me. You said that we'd be together, why? Why did you leave me? I don't know how to do this Mulder. I don't know how to be me without you. Please God, Please don't take him too." Skinner and Payton sat in the lobby waiting for Scully for over an hour. She finally stepped out into the hall way, and Skinner rushed to her side. Her eyes were red from crying, and she was shaking. " Dana, is there someplace that I can take you?" " I need to find a Rabbi, to say the Kaddish. I need to get ahold of some friends of ours to sit Shivas for Mulder." She stared ahead of her, and her voice no longer shook while she spoke. " Just tell me who I need to call." Skinner put his arm around her, and she nodded. They stood quietly for a moment before realizing that someone had walked up. " Are you Dana Mulder?" " Yes." She lifted her head, not recognizing the voice. She saw a tall, slender woman with brown curls standing before her, and her resolve snapped. " YOU! HOW DARE YOU COME HERE NOW. HOW DARE YOU! Payton turned to see what had upset Scully, there was just a timid looking young woman cowering away from Dana. " I came to see my brother, Fox, is he in surgery? Is he going to be okay?" " You Bitch! You Heartless, Spineless, Bitch. He's Dead." She spat. Scully was enraged, and Skinner had difficulty holding her back. Scully wanted to rip the woman's eyes from her head. She stood there so serene, so innocent, Mulder had died trying to find her, and she couldn't have cared less. " Try living with the fact that he's gone, just like he tried to live with losing you." The woman standing before stared at the ground, but Scully could not stop. " I can't believe that you had

the nerve to show up here." Samantha looked back up at Scully, and tried to approach her, Skinner pushed her away. " Ma'am, now is probably not a good time to do this. Just go please." Skinner nodded towards the door, and Payton wiped at her eyes. " I want to see my brother. I just found out that he was here. My father called me." " Your Father called you? So your Father survived, but my husband didn't." A sob tore from her chest, and she fell against the wall that she was standing next to. " God! This is unbelievable!" She laughed hysterically, and slid down the wall into a near sitting position. Payton rushed to her side. " Dana, let's go someplace else all right?" She pulled Scully up from the floor, and pulled her towards the elevator. The doors slid open, and they stepped inside. Scully paced inside the elevator, and Payton watched her cautiously. As the doors slid open, Scully could only hear voices around her. She looked at her hands as they shook, and Margaret put her arm around her shoulder. " The chapel is empty, would that be okay?" Scully nodded, and felt herself being guided into the darkened room. Several candles were all ready burning, and Payton went to the altar to light another. She handed Scully a candle, and she just stared at it. " Look at all these candles. You know Mulder, you didn't have to go to all this trouble. A nice bottle of wine, and a movie would have been fine." " But it's your birthday, Doc. Besides, I'm trying to score here." " You don't have to try. I love you, you know." " Yeah. I know. You've always loved me." " True, but , it really hit me while we were working on that case in Comity, New Hampshire." " You were angry with me the entire case, and Ang-" " Don't you dare say her name. I was angry with you because I loved you. And I was angry with myself for not telling you." " You can tell me now." " I just did." " Tell me again. I love to hear it." " I love you Fox Mulder." " Dana, I love you too." " Dana?" " Dana?" Scully felt her arm being tugged, and she looked up. The candles divided into hundreds of tiny lights through the tears in her eyes, and before she knew what she was doing, she screamed, and pushed the altar over onto the floor. " There is No Truth! There is no Justice, there's only death, and pain, and emptiness, and fear, and I don't want to believe anymore. I don't want to feel this anymore. I hate everything that I stand for, and I hate you most of all because you don't feel what I feel, you don't love like I have loved. You only hurt, and take, and kill the people that I love, and you won't stop until you destroy me. But I won't let you. I am not what you want me to be. I will not be that ever again. Do you hear me? I am never going to be the same again, and I don't want your sympathy. Don't talk to me about love, and forgiveness, and happiness, it's all bullshit. Everything is bullshit in the end and if you haven't found that out by now, then you haven't been listening . That is what he was trying to tell me all those years. And I wouldn't listen. There are no miracles, and the stars are not diamonds, they are just particles illuminated, and my children are not my own. They were given to me by a Monster. The Monster who murdered the only man that I have ever loved, and he is upstairs, recovering nicely, while I am here alone. ALONE. I will always, always be alone." She sobbed, and knelt before the remains of the altar. The last of the candles was sputtering out, the flame choking in the pool of hardening wax that surrounded it on the floor. Walter Skinner came in, and lead Dana out to his car. Park Plaza Hotel One Hour Later Dana Mulder turned the water off, and stepped into the steaming bath tub. The water rose up around her neck, and she rested her head against the smooth porcelain. Skinner had left minutes before, only after she had begged him to leave her alone. She felt the hot water sending ripples through her flesh, but she was still cold. She leaned forward and turned the spout on again. After a few

moments, the water was nearly overflowing, and she turned the spout off once again. She laid back, and closed her eyes, willing sleep to come. Drowning is the easiest death, the euphoria that comes over you just before you go under, she thought. She slid down a little bit. It wouldn't take much, just a few more inches, and I will be with him. She slid down again, squeaking against the bottom of the tub as she lifted her legs out onto the edge. Just a little farther, it's okay Dana. You can do it. Just let go, and he will be there, and- She felt the hair on the top of her head lift slightly, and she sat up quickly. She looked around, but could see no one. The water sloshed over the rim, onto the floor, and she touched the top of her head. The room was completely silent as she stared at the pool of water on the marble floor. Dana grabbed her towel, and got out of the bath tub. She dressed quickly, headed downstairs, and hailed a taxi. The Bristol Place Hotel Room 208 Elliott peered out into the hall way through the peep hole. Scully continued banging on the door, and Elliott pulled the door open quickly. " I was just leaving. Did you change your mind? How's Mulder?" " Mulder didn't make it." " Oh my God, Scully, I'm sorry." " Please don't ever call me that again. I don't want to talk about what happened to Mulder right now. I just want to find Strughold, and put a bullet in his brain. Can you help me?" "Dana, I- I hope that you have thought about this. This is serious, you could be killed, what about your children?" "All I can think about right now is the fact that my children don't have a father. And all of the people that I care about have died because this man continues to breathe. I have to do something about that if I am ever going to have any peace in this life." " Then let's go." Agent Elliott pulled her car out onto the Q.E.W. and headed south to London, Ontario. Dana sat quietly, staring out the window. She hadn't said a word since they left the hotel, and Elliott respected her silence. Dana's cell phone began to ring, she shut it off, and continued staring out the window. " When I do get out of here, will you marry me? I mean a real wedding this time, flowers in your hair, cocktail weenies, the whole nine yards." " Yes, I will." " Dana, can I ask you what happened? I understand if you don't want to talk about it, but, I have to know if this is something that you can handle. I'm trusting you with my life as much as you're trusting me." " He stopped breathing. The doctors weren't able to give me a reason, so they want to perform an autopsy, they said that they should know within a few hours. Morley, and Spender survived, and according to you, so did Alex Krycek." " God, Scu-uh Dana, I'm sorry." " Please stop saying that." She pinched the bridge of her nose, and breathed deeply. " Carson, I apologize, You can imagine what I'm dealing with right now." " Yes, I can, and I don't mean to press. We'll be there soon, and I think that you'll need some time to focus before we get there." Scully nodded, and sniffed. She was crying again, and Elliott handed her a tissue. " Dana, I need for you to put this aside for a moment while we discuss how we're going to do this. I need for you to be as cold as you can. Do you understand? If you have any emotion at all, I don't think that you'll be able to pull this off. I need for you to push all of your feelings down, until you are almost a machine. It will keep you alive, I promise. Just keep your eyes open, don't think about anything except the very next moment, and stay close to me. We are walking right into the most well guarded place I know. I stole an access card from the body of one of the assassins as she was being loaded into the coroners wagon. That will get us through the front gate, but once we get in, it is up to us to steer clear of the video surveillance, and motion detectors. There is also a person that I need you to look out for. His name is Phipps, he is about 5'9, brown hair, he's a weapons expert, and he's Strughold's

body guard. He's probably the person responsible for the bomb. He has a room that is connected to Strughold's. I don't think that it will be very hard to get him out of his room if I can create a disturbance on the main floor of the house. " How much of a threat is this guy? I mean what kinds of weaponry are we talking about here?" " You name it. He's a marksman. In fact, the only person that I know that comes even remotely close to him in skill is Payton. " " I thought that you were the marksman out of your partnership." " No, I am the linguist. I speak eleven languages, Margaret's the one holding the F.B.I.'s current record for marksmanship. I'll explain the layout of the house as soon as we get close enough for you to see what I'm saying." She paused, and looked at Scully intently. "I want you to use my gun. I made threats against Strughold, Skinner heard me. No one would come after you." " But what about you, you'll be on the run-" " I'm already on the run. Once they discover that I'm still alive- Look, it will just be easier this way. You have a future, you have a life to go back to. I don't, so don't argue with me, okay? Here's the plan." Elliott went over the details of their plan as Scully sat quietly, preparing herself to take a life. Strughold Residence 3:30 A.M. Elliott handed Scully her gun, and she clicked a bullet into place. Elliott slid the access card in the scanner until it beeped. It flashed green, and they entered the back gate of the house. A surveillance camera began panning the area. Elliott signaled for Scully to stoop down under the camera's range, and they slipped past it. Elliott entered a security code into the alarm key pad, and the alarm flashed green. Elliott breathed a sigh of relief, and motioned for Scully to stay close. They stepped into a darkened kitchen, and made their way to the doorway. Elliott peered out, the hall way was empty. They crossed the hall way into a living room that was done in dark burgundy with white trim. There was a massive oak table in the center of the room, and tapestries on the walls. Embers glowed in the fireplace, as if it had been used recently, and a half empty brandy snifter sat on a low table beside a Queen Anne style chair. Elliott pulled a gun out of a box that was stashed in an armoire that stood in the west corner of the room. She loaded the clip, then stooped down towards the floor. She waved for Scully to cross the room. Scully came upon Elliott kneeling over a body. " Scully, this is Phipps, he's dead. Someone has already been here." " Let me look at the body." She looked him over briefly, and stared at Elliott. " He wasn't shot, strangled, or stabbed. I'd have to do a closer inspection to find out anything more." " Maybe not." Elliott picked up the brandy snifter, and held it to her nose. " What are you thinking?" Scully watched Elliott swirl the contents of the glass around. " I'm thinking poison, and I'm guessing that it was someone that he knew. Phipps was too cautious for anyone to enter covertly, that's why I was a little concerned when we got in here so easily. There's also a bit of powder on this table. We better be extremely careful, someone may be watching us." Elliott lead Scully through another hall way to a foyer. There was marble tile on the floors, and a wide polished mahogany balustrade curved up the staircase. Heavy velvet draperies hung at the windows, and a crystal chandelier hung overhead. They ascended the carpeted stairs silently, and as they approached the landing, Elliott reached for the key pad to enter a different code. Scully held the gun close to her chest, and followed Elliott into a large open doorway. They crossed an anteroom filled with gilt edged oil paintings of the ocean, marble sculptures, and plush white furnishings. There was a heavy oak door with an iron handle, and Elliott nodded towards it. They crossed the room, and Elliott pushed the handle. The door slid open quietly, and they stepped inside. The room was dark, and it took a moment for Scully's

eyes to adjust. She watched Elliott cross the room to the left side of the bed. Just as they had planned, Elliott switched on the bedside lamp, and as Strughold sat up, Scully pressed Elliott's gun into his forehead. " Agent Scully, I don't believe I've had zie pleasure of meeting you in person." " Shut up you murdering Son of a Bitch. You're going to pay for killing Mulder." She slid the bolt into place, and prepared to fire. " Don't you want to know why I did what I did? Isn't zat why you're here? You want to know why your daughter died, and why your husband died, and how you're going to die." " I didn't come here for an interview. I came here to kill you." " I see zat I have been betrayed by someone zat I trusted." He looked at Carson as she pointed the gun at his chest. " Scully, don't listen to him. Just end this, pull the trigger, and let's be done with it." " She can't pull zie trigger Carson, she is afraid. She is bound by a moral code zat you and I don't live by. First do no harm, isn't zat zie doctor's oath? Hmm?" He smirked at her as she glared at him harshly. " I can tell you zat your daughter helped us to furzer our research by leaps and bounds. Was it due to Mulder's genes or yours? We have always been curious." " Scully, pull the trigger, or I'm going to do it." Scully stared at Strughold, the man behind all of the nightmares that she had lived through. He was a small German man, with a thin white moustache, and he laid in the center of a king sized bed covered in silk. She felt the hatred swelling within her, and she became nauseous. " Pull zie trigger, Scully." He mocked " Scully pull the fucking trigger." She struggled to pull the trigger, feeling it slide beneath her finger. It was warmed from her touch, and it was becoming slick with sweat, as she froze before the laughing man with the harsh gaze. " Carson, I can't- I can't be what they are. I-" Elliott raised her gun to Strughold's head, and pulled the trigger. The old man slumped onto the bed, a bright ring of blood forming on the sheets. " I don't have that problem. Let's get the hell out of here." " Carson, I'm sorry. I just couldn't bring myself to do it." " It's okay, I understand. It takes a lot out of you to kill a man while you're looking him right in the eyes." They exited the bedroom, and Scully began to head for the stairs. Elliott stopped. " What are you doing?" Scully questioned. " I'm setting fire to this place to lessen the chances that anyone is going to come after us. And, I know where he keeps the colonization schedule. I'll just be a moment. Stay here." Elliott disappeared around a corner, and returned with an attache case. " He kept these in the library. I guess he had too much faith in his alarms, and the people surrounding him." They made their way down the stairs, and Scully felt the nuzzle of a gun press into the base of her skull. " Stop right there, I'll take that." They turned to find Agent Payton holding a gun on them. Carson stopped, and dropped the case. " Margaret, what the hell? What are you doing here?" Payton leaned down and picked up the briefcase, then stepped back towards the door. " I came for this of course. I didn't know where he kept them, but I knew that you did. I also knew that you would be coming here tonight to finish Strughold." " But why? What do you have to do with this? How long have you been involved?" " From the very beginning, you are so blind. You did most of the dirty work for me, or at least that's what everyone thinks. By the time this is over, you'll be taking the wrap for Mulder's death too. But don't worry, you won't live long enough to suffer any consequences." Scully gasped, " You killed Mulder? You're responsible for the explosion?" " No, that man there is responsible for the explosion. Turn around, and start walking towards the door." " Payton, why are you doing this? Is this about the money? Because I can't believe that." Elliott looked at her questioningly. " No, this is about my dad. This is about how Mulder got my dad killed after he

became an informant, a party to Mulder's crusade. My father worked at the State Department with William Mulder, and Peter Kleina, Strughold had my father murdered, and I wanted to make him pay for it. But what good is a fortune in global secrets if you're wanted by the authorities. I decided to let you take the fall for it, while I sell this information, and live a fantastic life of luxury." " So Mulder died because you wanted to be rich?" Scully felt the nausea returning, and she swallowed hard. " No, it was pure revenge. " She lifted her gun to Scully's head, and pulled the mechanism into place. " And now, I'm going to get rid of the two of you. Guns are so messy don't you think? I am rather fond of the more subtle approach, a bit of cyanide in a cup of tea, or in a brandy glass." " You weren't there when Gryphon made that tea for me. You couldn't have-" " Where do you think that he got the poison? Oh, he didn't know that it was me, that would have blown my cover with the F.B.I., but, I made sure that he had it when he needed it. You know, ever since we had that organic chemistry class with you, I have been fascinated by chemical compounds. Especially those found in South America. The Indians there have some incredible mixtures, things that you wouldn't believe. They have poisons that kill instantly, and poisons that kill weeks after ingestion. Did you know that there are chemical combinations that will cause you to appear dead for up to two days? Just a tiny prick, and boom. Get on your knees." Scully and Elliott knelt down on the marble floor. Payton circled above them with her gun trained on Scully's head. She took Elliott's gun, and tucked it into the small of her back. Elliott looked over at Scully, her head was bowed, and her lips moved silently. " Payton, are you trying to tell us that Mulder isn't dead?" Scully's head snapped up, and she looked at Margaret eagerly. " I injected it while she was talking to the EMT's. He didn't even notice, pity, you won't be alive long enough to stop them from burying him. A fitting death I think, buried alive, in a pit of secrets. That's justice. It's horrible for him, I'm sure, he is totally cognizant of what is happening around him, but powerless to stop it. I hope you didn't authorize an autopsy, that would really hurt. Poor Scully, I'll make sure that you're buried right next to him." She faced Scully and Elliott, smirking at them as she waved the gun back and forth between the two of them. There was a small click behind her, and then a flash. She collapsed to the ground in a heap. Alex Krycek stepped out of the darkness, pulled Carson up to his chest, and kissed her gently. " I couldn't let her kill you before I found out where my son is." " Oh God, Alex, thank you." Scully rushed to Payton's side, and checked her pulse. " Margaret, tell me how I can help Mulder." " Wh-Why should I? He deserves to die." " Please, just tell me what you gave him. You know what it was like to not have your dad, please don't do the same thing to my children." " I will never tell you." Payton closed her eyes, and Scully clutched the tiny gold cross at her neck. " You had better get going Scully. I'll catch up to you soon, Alex and I have some things to discuss." " Well he's going to have to come with us, I need your help. I have to figure out what she gave Mulder, and you know her better than anyone else. Can you think of any type of poison that she was particularly fond of, or maybe something that she was working on recently, a compound, or a derivative?" " No, I haven't been around her for nearly two years, it could be anything. Let's think about this in the car, we don't have much time." Krycek picked up the briefcase, and tucked it under his arm, as they slammed the door behind them. Scully rushed out to Elliott's car, and jumped in the driver's seat. She turned her cellular phone back on, and dialed Skinner's number. He answered on the third ring. " Yeah?" " Sir, this is Dana, I am forty minutes away from the hospital, and I need you to get down there." " What's going

on? Is everything all right?" He grabbed his jacket, and car keys, and closed the door to his hotel room. " Yes, and no. Mulder isn't dead, Sir, he is in some sort of poison induced sleep state. Agent Payton injected Mulder with an exotic poison, and if we don't get to the hospital before they start the autopsy, he's going to die for real." " Dana, are you feeling okay? I can be right over if you need to talk. Where are you? I'll be right over." " Walter, I'm Fine, really, I'm with Agent Elliott, and Alex Krycek. We went after Strughold, but discovered that Agent Payton had already killed him. She confessed to trying to murder Mulder out of revenge Sir. I know that this sounds incredible, but it is really quite common in parts of the world. Payton grew up in South America, she knows the flora, and she's known as 'The Spider' within the Bureau, you said so yourself." " Okay Agent Scully, I'm on my way. What do you need for me to do?" Scully gave him directions to pass on to the hospital staff, as she headed north on the Q.E.W..If they could get a tox screen back, they might be able to revive Mulder before permanent neurological damage was done. She thought about him laying in the morgue, cold and frightened, thinking that she had abandoned him. Sadness gripped at her heart, and she gave the car gas. Toronto General Hospital Morgue 4:20 A.M. Mulder tried to move his limbs for the one millionth time. They were still frozen in place. His mind raced, he thought of all the drugs that he knew of that caused paralysis, but could think of none that would cause the doctors around him to believe that he was dead. He remembered waking up as Scully kissed his lips, she was so sad. He could feel her teardrops on his face, as he listened to what she was saying, and wanted to cry out to her that he was alive. I heard you, Scully, he thought. I heard every word that you said. Please don't leave me in this place. It's cold, and dark, and I need you. I need our babies. You've never given up on me before Scully, don't give up on me now. He tried to scream, but no sound came from his mouth. He tried to raise his eyelids, but they were cemented shut. He could hear himself screaming, and thought that he would go mad from it. He had felt himself being wheeled down the hall way from the operating room. He heard the orderlies talking about Scully destroying the chapel, and he heard Samantha whispering in his ear. His throat constricted but the movement went completely unnoticed. He was a corpse as far as the outside world was concerned, and he might remain that way if no one figured out that he was still alive. Mulder concentrated all of his thoughts on Scully, and prayed that she would figure it out before he really died, or went mad from the thought of it. Walter Skinner raced into the doorway of the hospital. It had only been a few hours since he had left, but things were different this time. He pushed the elevator button, and paced until the doors swooshed open. The nurses had changed shifts since he had left, and they weren't quite sure who Mulder was when he inquired after his whereabouts. Dr. Farber was exiting the emergency room on Skinner's left, as he waited for the nurses to track down the information. He approached the doctor, and began speaking to him before he had closed the distance between them. " Dr. Farber, I'm Walter Skinner, Assistant Director of the F.B.I., We spoke earlier," " Yes, I remember, you were with Mrs. Mulder, how can I help you?" " This sounds incredible, but Fox Mulder isn't dead, I'll explain it to you on the way to the morgue, if you have a moment." " I have all the time in the world for someone who says that a patient that I declared legally dead, some time ago, is not really dead. They walked towards the elevator, and pushed the down button after they climbed inside. What gives you the idea that he is still alive?" " Agent Mulder was injected with a poison of some kind. We aren't sure what chemical, or it's composition, but we do know that

the person that admitted to poisoning him is an expert on poisons and their composition. She also grew up in South America, and may have been exposed to certain knowledge that would allow her the skill necessary to create a toxin that mimics death. The goal is for the victim to be buried alive." " This sounds rather fantastic, rather like a movie I once saw." " Yes, Doctor, I'm aware of how this sounds, but, you have to believe me. This is not unheard of in the medical community. Mrs. Mulder is a medical doctor, and she was able to cite instances where people had been buried alive, after they'd been poisoned. There have been several cases in New Orleans, with the Creole community. Can you think of any drugs that would cause this type of paralysis? A state nearly undetectable by life saving equipment?" " I can't think of any one specific chemical, there are a number of drugs which induce paralysis, yet most are temporary, they would have to have been altered to last this long." They entered the morgue, and Dr. Farber pulled open the drawer where Mulder's body was being stored. " There are no signs of rigor mortis, doesn't that prove that something is going on here." Skinner looked at the doctor questioningly. The doctor pulled on a pair of gloves, and lifted Mulder's eyelids. " Not really, rigor mortis is not a consistent indicator." " Can we get a tox screen? Agent Scully- Mrs. Mulder, asked me for a specific series of tests for you to perform." " Let's give it a try." The doctor called the laboratory for assistance, and they sent a team of researchers down to begin testing the blood samples that Dr. Farber had drawn. Skinner leaned over Mulder's body, and stared down at him. Scully told him that Mulder was aware of everything that was going on around him, and he wanted to reassure Mulder that everything would be okay. " Mulder, this is Skinner, you've been poisoned, but we're working on finding an antidote. Scully is on her way, so hang in there okay?" Mulder felt his lungs expand a millimeter, it was the best sigh of relief that he could manage, but he was grateful for it. Scully was working on it, she would find a way to save him, and they would be together soon. He could hardly wait for the moment that he would be able to take her hand, and tell her once again that she meant the world to him. Toronto General Hospital Scully, Elliott, and Krycek ran down the emergency exit stairs rather than wait for the elevator. Scully burst through the doors of the morgue, rushed over to Mulder's body, and ran her hand across his cheek. " Mulder, it's me, Honey, we're working on this, you hold on." She kissed him, and Elliott handed her a blanket to put over him. Alex went out into the hall, and waited for Elliott. One of the chemists handed Scully a preliminary report, and she opened the file. " Dr. Scully, I have never seen anything quite like this before. This is the most incredible toxin that I have ever seen." " What am I reading here? This is like a phone book." " Yes, I know, there are nearly thirty different drugs listed, many of which we can't identify. The most prominent are curare derivatives, but there is pipecuronium bromide, diazepam, atracurium besylate, and prochlorperazine edisylate. As you know these drugs affect the autonomic, peripheral, and central nervous systems, and they are neuromuscular depressants. This toxin, this- is the work of a genius or a mad man. The toxin appears to be a lock and key type system. The first half of the chemical begins to work, but it's full effects are not felt until the final chemical is added to the reaction. By introducing morphine into his system, *we* activated the second stage of the toxin. That's why he appeared to die in surgery. We need to find the original chemicals to come up with an antidote. Some of these drugs are not even compatible. Theoretically, the assailant would have had to give him several injections, but he or she managed to alter the chemicals just enough that they are not even behaving

true to character. I wish I had more time to study this, this is absolutely fascinating." Scully looked over at Mulder, and placed her hands on her hips. " What do you suggest we do to reactivate his nervous system?" " I'm going to try a series of things, but I really need a sample of the original." " The Agent that gave it to him is dead, we have no way of producing the original. Please keep working on it, I'm going to consult with someone." She stepped over to where Agent Elliott was standing, and motioned for her to go out into the hall. " Any news?" " They were able to identify a lot of the chemicals, but they need an original sample to expedite things. Did Payton have a purse, or a bag that she carried? Maybe if one of us went to the hotel that she was staying at, we'd be able to find the drug, or perhaps the syringe." " I don't know where she was staying, you'll have to ask Skinner." Elliott and Scully walked over to the pay phones where Skinner was placing a call. " Carson, can I ask you, why is Alex still here?" Scully looked over at Krycek sitting outside of the morgue, and then back to Elliott. " He's waiting for me, but he also wants to be here when Mulder comes back. He's going to give Mulder the colonization information. He's trying to clear his name." " I don't think that that's a good idea, Alex killed Mulder's father." " Maybe I should tell him what he's waiting to hear, and get rid of him. I can take the information. If he's only interested in exposing the truth, then it shouldn't matter who presents the Justice Department with the evidence." Skinner hung up the phone and turned to the two women standing before him. " That was Agent Gabriel, I had him checking the database for poisons that match the composition of what Mulder was given, he found several toxins with a similar structure, but none with the second stage activation trigger. Dana, do you have any ideas about how you are going to proceed?" " Well Sir, we were hoping to search Margaret's hotel room, maybe she left the original vial or syringe in a bag, or in a purse. She had to have had it on her when she injected Mulder." " She didn't have any bags with her when I saw her last, I took you to the hotel, and when I dropped you off, she called me and asked me to authorize a second rental car, the one that you rented at the airport was left in Oshawa. She said that all of your things were in the trunk of the first rental car." Elliott nodded, " That would mean that she had the poison on her. And that also means that it's probably still on her, but her body is in London, and we set fire to the house. Skinner shook his head. "You were at least familiar with her methods, maybe something you know that you don't realize-" Scully crossed her arms, and bit her lip. " I know that there is something that we're missing. She wanted Mulder to be buried alive, we know that, so the drug must wear off after a certain amount of time, but how long? And how much neurological damage will he have sustained in that time? He might live, but then he would be non responsive- or in a vegetative state for the rest of his life." " I'll call her brother Jack. Maybe he knows what she was working on. The two of them are- were very close. Or maybe he knows what chemicals she was using. They could have been plant chemicals from South America for all we know." Elliott took out her cell phone, and dialed a series of numbers. Scully looked down at the floor. " Sir, can you call the mail room and see if she received any packages from South America recently, maybe that will help us to narrow down the search for the chemical origins." " Good idea, Scully." He picked up the telephone, and dialed the number. Alex Krycek approached Scully, and shifted nervously. " Hey, Scully, I know that I am probably the last person that you trust right now, but if you'd like, I can go back to Strughold's to check Payton's body for the vial. Maybe it's in her suit jacket, or in her trench coat pocket-" " Wait! This is her jacket that I'm wearing. She gave it to

me after I took off my sweatshirt to splint Mulder's leg." She dug into each pocket, and reached inside the breast pocket. She pulled out a plastic vial filled with a pink tinted fluid." Oh my God, this must be it, I've had it with me the whole time." Scully pushed past Krycek, and entered the morgue. " I've got the poison. It was in the jacket that I'm wearing. Do you think that we will be able to save him in time?" She waited for Dr. Berrow's reply, as he consulted with a doctor whose badge said that his name was Dr. Jannitz. " Mrs. Mulder, Dr. Jannitz is under the impression that we should just let the chemicals wear off naturally, that it is probable that there won't be any neurological damage at all if we just wait. I however feel that it would be best if you proceeded to try to counter the effects with other drugs." " Dr. Jannitz, what gives you the impression that there won't be any brain damage at all, have you seen this before? Have you seen any case studies?" " Yes, actually, I have, I did a year's service with the Peace Corps. I was sent to Brazil, and there was an instance where a woman was buried alive. A family that was burying their grandmother heard the woman screaming, and alerted authorities. She was brought to us for treatment, because the Brazilian doctors knew that we had lab capabilities. It seems that the woman had been stung in the leg she said, and went to bed that night, only to wake up in a coffin two days later. It turns out that her husband was attempting to murder her so that he could run off with another woman. The coroners report, done before she was buried, found a puncture wound, but it was inconsistent with an insect sting. Upon further examination, after the woman was "resurrected", it was discovered to be the entrance wound from a type of dart. The woman suffered no ill affects afterward, and she is still leading a normal life." Dr. Berrow shook his head, and placed his glasses on the top of his head. "You're talking about a primitive strain of a locally produced toxin. This chemical, this - this is so far removed from what we know of pharmacology, I am afraid that we cannot predict what it will do, *if* Mr. Mulder is even still alive" Scully interjected. " Then how can you say that he will respond to a course of treatment that involves pumping him full of more chemicals? I have to agree with Dr. Jannitz, I think that we should wait. As much as I'd like to spare my husband any suffering, I don't want to get impatient and end up harming him." Dr. Berrow nodded, and went back to Mulder's side. Scully went out into the hall to inform Skinner of her decision. Hospital Lobby Two Hours Later Scully slept fitfully in the lobby's tiny pink chair. Elliott watched her turn from time to time, trying to get comfortable. Skinner watched Elliott. " Agent Elliott, I- uh, I need to apologize for what I said earlier, about you turning on us. I was out of line, and well, we need to talk about your job, what's going to happen. Are you okay with that?" " Sir, there's nothing to discuss, my job with the Bureau is a thing of the past, and frankly, I'm not that upset about it. I've had some time to think tonight, and I don't think that I am suited for this anymore. Payton didn't kill Strughold, Sir, I did. And as many times as I've had to do it before, it never got to me like it did tonight. On top of that, I watched my best friend die because she was about to kill me. I've watched Scully go from dedicated doctor to desperate vigilante, but when it came right down to it, she couldn't do it. She said " I can't be what they are." That devastated me. I am no better than they are, and it may as well have been me that injected Mulder." " Carson, regret is a double edged sword, you can look back now because you are in a different place, but think back to the moment. You did what you had to do. Anyone in your situation would have. You don't have to throw away a promising career to punish yourself for what these people did to Mulder." " I

can't stay knowing that Scully will see me differently for the rest of my life. She was my friend, and although she will tell you that her opinion of me won't change, she won't be able to help herself." She handed him the attache' case, and stood up. " Give this to Scully when she wakes up, and tell her that I said goodbye." Skinner extended his hand, and she took it. " Goodbye, Carson." " One other thing sir, will you tell Mulder that there *are* monsters, just not the kind that he was looking for." She turned in the direction of the morgue doors, then walked away.

Toronto General Hospital 10 A.M. Room 702 Scully awoke with a start. She was curled up in a chair beside Mulder's bed, and she thought that she heard him gasp. She lifted her head, and looked into his face. There was no change. She continued to stare at him, hoping that she wasn't dreaming. " Come on Mulder. I'm waiting for you." She took his hand in hers, and kissed it. Skinner came in a moment later. " Anything?" " I thought I heard him gasp, but I could be wrong." " You look refreshed, like you got a little rest, can I get you some coffee, a bagel maybe, or some juice?" " Sir, you don't have to take care of me, I'm fine. I do appreciate you staying with us last night, it was very sweet of you. Where's Carson, I haven't seen her since last night in the lobby." " She's gone. She wanted me to give you this though. It's the information that Strughold was hiding." " Did she say where she was going, or why she was leaving? The people that were after her are dead." " She said it was because she couldn't face you after what she did. She really looks up to you Scully, and she felt like she let you down." " What? I'm the one who didn't have the courage to pull the trigger, even after what that bastard did to my family, I still didn't have the nerve." " Well, I understand where she is coming from. You were able to rise above the circumstance, whereas , she is a victim to it. People are what they are-killers or not. That's how Payton was able to do this to Mulder without any thought to you or your children." " I wanted to say thank you. I guess she already knows though right?" Scully looked at Skinner questioningly. " I'm sure she does. I feel sorry for the kid, no family, her best friend tried to kill her, her boyfriend is a wanted murderer, hell, so is she, for that matter." " Mulder will be disappointed." Mulder gasped sharply, and took a deep breath, his eyes were still closed. "Oh My God! Mulder, Honey, it's me, can you hear me? Are you all right?" Scully sat up quickly as Mulder gasped. Skinner went to find Dr. Berrow and Dr. Jannitz. The two doctors entered and performed exams, but Mulder did not regain consciousness. Room 702 1:35 P.M. Skinner hung up his phone with a snap. " That was Agent Gabriel, he said that Payton received a package from Sao Paulo yesterday. It was marked " Photos" and Mandy in the mail room didn't run it through inspection. He said that Margaret told Mandy that once a month her family was sending photos, and because the two of them were friends, Mandy never questioned it. I've recommended that she be relieved of her duties. Scully nodded, but did not say a word. " You all right? When will your Mother be here?" " Tomorrow. I'm just afraid for Mulder. Did I do the right thing? What if he's not out of the woods? What if I chose the wrong path, and now he'll be brain damaged for the rest of his life? Mulder would never want to live like that . I should have let them prepare an antidote. Worse still, what if he really is dead? Corpses gasp like that all the time, it's a muscular reflex brought on by the remaining electrical impulses in the brain." " Scully, don't do this to yourself. You're a doctor, you made an informed decision, and Mulder will get through this, it's just taking some time." " It's the waiting that's killing me. I can't stand just staring at him like this." " Then go back to your hotel room and try and get some sleep. I'll stay with him for a while, and if he wakes up, I'll call you

right away." " I can't, Sir, I can't leave him." " Mulder would insist that you do it Scully, now get out of here, go on." Scully kissed Mulder's cheek, and left the room. She hated to leave Mulder in this state, but she was exhausted, and she knew that the babies would be needing all of her attention when they arrived. Scully turned the corner of the Intensive Care Unit, and stepped into the path of Samantha wheeling Morley down the hall in a wheel chair. He had lost his right leg, and was bandaged from where his knee should have been, to his waist. " Dana, I'm terribly sorry for your loss, my daughter told me that Mulder did not survive his injuries, and you have our deepest sympathy." " Your *daughter* was mistaken. Fox did survive his injuries, he was poisoned. " " Fox is alive?" Samantha asked. " Scully,-" Morley began. " That's Mrs. Mulder." Scully was shaking with rage. Samantha just stood there, not speaking. "Please give Mulder our best wishes. Come along, Samantha." "Go to hell." Dana stormed away from them, and bowed her head once she was on the elevator. She didn't know where the irrational rage came from, she only knew that the unrepentant young woman was moments away from having her hair torn out. Scully stepped off of the elevator as it opened in front of the hospital gift shop. She thought for a moment, then went inside and purchased a pack of cigarettes. She hated the idea that every now and then she craved a cigarette, but the day had been completely lousy. She knew that she wouldn't be able to sleep at all after confronting Samantha, so she decided to stay. Scully walked through the hospital's revolving door, and lit a cigarette, as she sat down on a bench. The yellow paint was faded, cracked and peeling. The harsh Canadian winds had stripped most of the color away. She inhaled sharply, and felt the smoke fill her lungs. She held her breath, enjoying the sensation as the nicotine entered her blood stream, then she exhaled slowly. The waiting was the worst part, she decided. She had too much time to regret... Room 702 2 P.M. Mulder saw Scully and the children packing up the Rover. It looked like they were going on vacation, there were suitcases, and a picnic basket sat in the front seat. They were all smiling. He felt happy for the first time in a long while. He watched them piling into the vehicle, and strapping up their seat belts. He called to Scully, but she didn't hear him. She continued tugging at her car seat until it fit properly. Mulder looked into the backseat. Lily sat between Jake and Saren, who were about four years old now. Lily was becoming quite the young woman, he thought. A golden retriever bounded from the house and leaped into the rear of the truck. Mulder went around the back of the truck to latch the door, and found a man latching the door already. He called to the man, but he did not answer. He called again, and then he called out to Lily. No one answered him. He heard Jake calling the man daddy, and he felt his heart breaking. Scully leaned over and kissed the man, as he started the vehicle. Mulder called out to her once more, then went to her window. He pounded on the window, but she kept smiling. The man backed the truck out of their driveway out into the street, he waved to Mulder, and Mulder saw that it was Jeffrey Spender. " Scully!" Mulder's eyes flew open, and he groaned. Assistant Director Skinner was standing over him, with his phone in his hands. " Scully, this is Skinner, get back here as soon as you can." " I'm downstairs sir, I'll be right up." Scully shoved the cigarette butt into the ashtray outside the doors, and ran for the elevator. She pushed the up button several times, wringing her hands impatiently. Mulder was awake, and calling her name. All she could think was 'Thank God. ' As the elevator door slid open on the seventh floor, Scully felt a lump forming in her throat. How many other people were begging for a miracle but not receiving one? She ran towards his door, and shoved it open. Mulder lay on the bed

grinning at her. " You think I could have those seeds now?" " How are you going to top that one Mulder?" " Give me some time, I'll come up with something." Scully went to his side and took his face in her hands. " Don't you ever, ever do anything like that again. I thought that my life was over, I-" " I heard you. I heard everything that you said, Scully, I'm so sorry, I'm sorry you had to go through this." " This wasn't your fault. Payton poisoned you. Mulder, there's so much to tell you, I don't quite know where to start." " Start by telling me that you're not planning to run off with Jeffrey Spender." " Where'd you get that nutty idea?" " Speaking of nuts-" Skinner pushed his glasses back up on the bridge of his nose, and put his hands on his hips. Room 819 Agent Spender sat on his bed rocking back and forth. They were coming for him, he knew it, and there was nothing that he could do to stop them. He could hear their metal probes clicking and pinging, as they held him down. The straps came up over his chest and arms, and suddenly he was nine years old again. Mommy, he heard himself calling. But she did not answer. There was only the grinding sound, and his screams as he felt the drill enter his mouth. He felt their long slender hands upon him, squeezing and prodding, the grey of their blank faces, smooth in the dim light. They never spoke to him, they only continued poking, and drilling, cutting, and scraping, peeling, and burning, and drawing pint after pint of blood. Jeffrey looked on in horror as he hovered above his body, and they continued their examinations. He felt his mind slipping again as the white light entered his brain, and he was silent from that moment forward.....

Epilogue Six Months Later Mulder residence Sunday, 6:45 P.M. Scully loaded the last of the dinner dishes into the dishwasher, as Mulder laid on the couch watching the evening news. He had been glued to the television in the last two weeks, after the hearings had begun. Several members of the State Department had committed suicide, and several other high ranking government officials had disappeared, after Mulder had presented the Justice Department with the information that Elliott had taken from Strughold. Globally, many of the world's nations had lost their leaders to coups, and the United Nations declared that it would institute a panel of diplomats to lead negotiations with any extra terrestrial biological entities. Mulder was scoffed at when he first called a session with the Director of the F.B.I., but the evidence was compelling enough that the information had to be looked into. Skinner had a difficult time accepting Mulder's and Scully's resignations, but he understood. They had other priorities now, and the quest had ended. He saw them socially from time to time, but his new position heading the F.B.I. kept him at the White House most of the time. He was expected at dinner the following Sunday, and hoped that they had invited Maggie Scully, as he was becoming quite interested in her lately. Skinner switched off the t.v., and dialed Mulder's phone number. " Mulder." " Hey, Mulder, it's Skinner, were you watching the recap from France?" " Yeah, I was. They've arrested five of the epidemiologists that were working on the project in Tunisia. Can you believe how far reaching this thing has gone?" " It's because of you and Scully, Mulder, I keep telling you, that your efforts paid off in a big way." " So how come I don't feel better about this?" " Maybe because your children will grow up in a very different world than you and I did." There was an uncomfortable pause, as Skinner grappled with broaching the touchy subject of his sister. " Did you ever hear from Samantha?" Mulder sighed, he knew that Skinner was only concerned about him, but it still hurt to talk about. " I did. She has decided to go on with her life in Canada. She's got a family, a home, and a career, I don't blame her, I only wanted to know, and now I do." " Will she at least keep in touch with you?" " We'll see. She said that it was very

painful for her to be reminded of that period of her life because of what they did to her, but-- I've given up hope that she will ever be anything more than the eight year old girl that I knew." Scully came in, and sat down beside him. He looked over at her, as she handed him her hairbrush. He held up one finger to her, signaling for her to wait another moment. She thrust her bottom lip forward, and he grinned at her. " Sir, I really should go, I have to give the twins their bath, and do the whole pajamy thing." " I understand, give Scully a big hug for me. Also, Mulder, I wanted to let you know that the position of Assistant Director is still open, I hope that you will consider it. You would be perfect, and not only that, you would be home for your family more often than you were." " I appreciate the offer sir, and I will consider it. Let me discuss it with Scully, and I'll get back to you. I don't think that I want a job anywhere if she's not my partner." " Let me know. Take care Mulder." Mulder hung up the phone, and held it for a moment longer. " Did he offer you the job again?" " Yeah, but like I said, I don't want to be without you. I'm perfectly happy staying home and writing that book that you and I talked about." " I think that you'll have a harder time giving up the chase than you think. Maybe you should consider it honey, it wouldn't be nearly as dangerous as what we *were* doing." " We'll talk about it. But not now, right now, I just want to enjoy being with you." Scully laid across Mulder's lap, and he began brushing her hair. " Something's been bothering me ever since Elliott left." " What's that?" " What have you learned about yourself as a person, Mulder? This quest, it took more than it gave, and yet, I wouldn't trade a moment of it for anything in the world." " That's because it consumed so much of our lives, we didn't have a choice but to become steeped in paranoia, and devoted to nothing but our work. And each other. I learned that I will go to any lengths to protect you, and that no matter how much I love Samantha, this stopped being about her years ago. What about you, Scully?" " I learned that I can still trust people despite everything. I can rely on myself, to be strong when I need to be, and that it's all right to not be strong all of the time. I can rely on others when necessary. But it feels good to not have to. I also learned that I am okay with not being an agent anymore. I can be whole just being a great Mom, and that's the most important job that I will ever have." " Have you heard anything from Carson?" Mulder stroked Scully's hair gently, thankful that her hair had grown out so quickly. " No, I haven't, I don't really expect to, Skinner said that she was feeling pretty defeated. I wonder if she caught up with Krycek, they seemed to have some unresolved issues." " Maybe that's not such a bad thing, considering they're two of a kind." " Skinner said something to me once about how people can't help being what they are. I can only wonder what happens in someone's past that drives them to kill with no remorse. Did the Bureau make her a killer, or was she a killer who became an F.B.I. Agent?" " I think she just got numb. It's happened to a lot of Agents. It would have happened to me eventually, if I hadn't been pestered by your incessant worrying." " Incessant worrying? Mulder, you make it sound as if I never let you out of my sight." " I know, what I'm saying is that I came to care about myself because you cared so much about me." " But why didn't it happen to me? I should have been able to pull that trigger, Mulder, but I couldn't. I wasn't thinking about Religion, or morality, I wasn't even thinking about ethics. That was the closest to numb that I have ever been, yet, I couldn't do it. I will never understand why I froze like that. I went there with every intention of killing that man-- It was something that I watched myself doing one hundred times, on the drive to London, but when we were in the moment, I froze. Does that make me unreliable? Carson's

life was in my hands, as much as my own was. Why didn't I?" " Scully, you're sworn to saving lives at all costs, I think it's contrary to your nature to commit murder. I think that you have rationalized killing for the Bureau, you're protecting the greater good, but to just shoot a man square between the eyes, I don't know that I would have been able to do it either." I'm proud that you had the courage to face him. You should be too. You can let that episode of your life close knowing that you did a great thing." " We lost our friend in the process." " She'll be around. She's doesn't have anyone else, well except for that one armed boyfriend of hers." " Mulder! That's mean. I'm going to try and find her. At least to say that nothing has changed. I just want to forget about the whole thing." She twisted the thick gold band on his finger, and watched it glimmer as it caught the light from their fireplace. " Some people don't want to be found. Maybe we should learn to respect that." " I'm sorry about Samantha." " Don't be. I have everything that I never dared to hope for." They sat quietly for a few minutes listening to Lily singing to the babies, upstairs. " Scully?" He stopped brushing, and squeezed her shoulder. " Yes?" She looked up at him with all the love in the world. " Call your Mom, and have her watch the kids tonight while I take you out on the town. There's a book signing at Joseph-Beth." " Oh yeah, which book?" " The updated version of the Klingon dictionary. He smiled down at her, then kissed the tip of her nose." " Throw in some "Chunky Monkey" ice cream and you've got yourself a date." " Double dips." " I'll get my coat." The End. Thank you for seeing this through until the end, I hope that you enjoyed the story, and I hope that it was worth your time and effort. All emails will be answered. The Liquid Sky.

End
file.